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# THE GLEAM

HELEN R. ALBEE



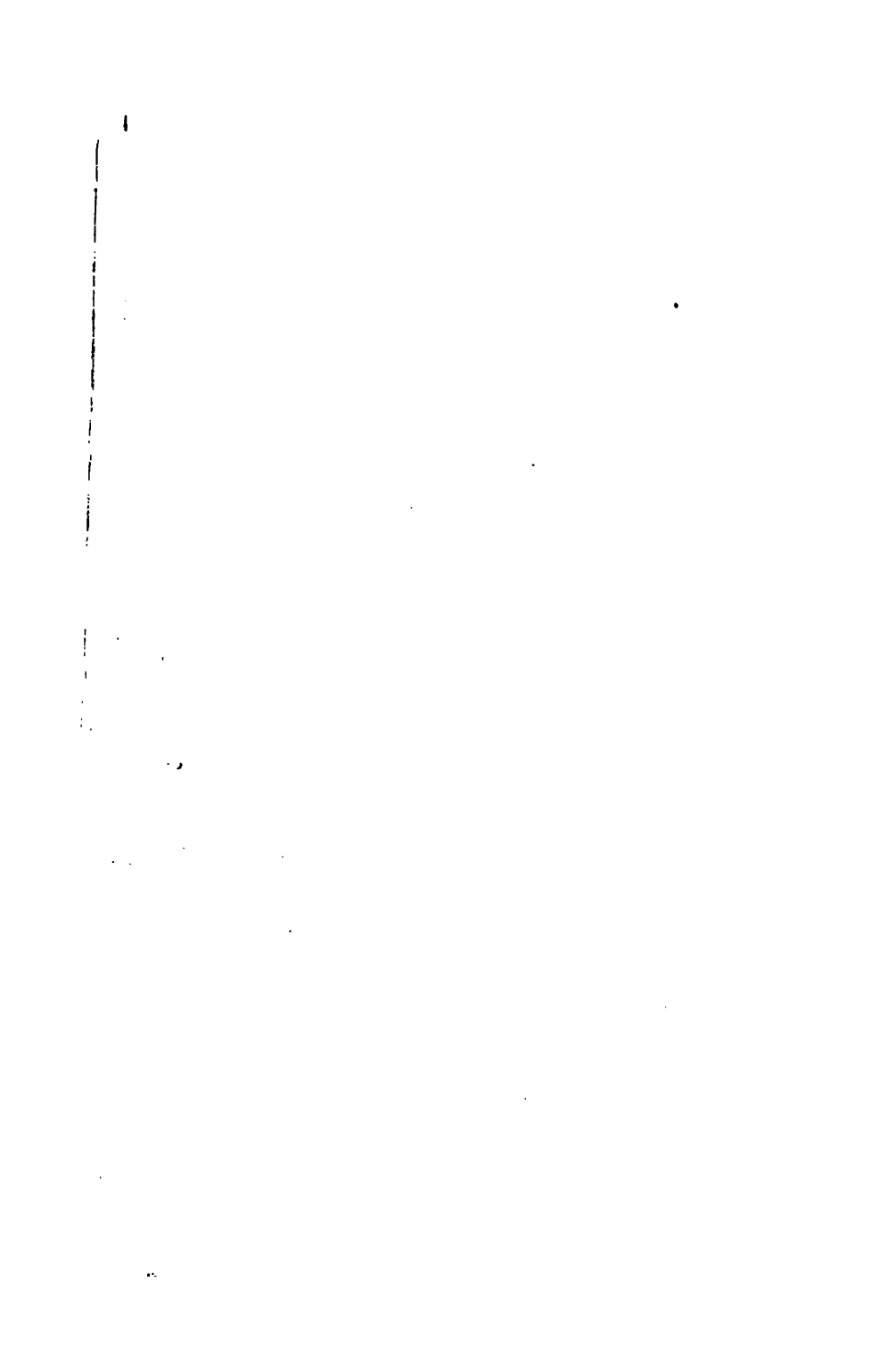


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# THE GLEAM

By

HELEN R. ALBEE

Author of

"Hardy Plants for Cottage Gardens," "Mountain Playmates," etc.



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**TO THOSE WHO SEEK TRUTH  
AND FEARLESSLY FOLLOW THE LIGHT  
THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED**





## PREFACE

Do not hastily misjudge and dismiss this little volume as an attack upon orthodoxy or Christian teachings; it is but a finger, pointing to a neglected region that lies outside of dogmatic theology, where a reverent seeker may find for himself evidences of Deity in the world about him. If these manifestations are studied aright, they will gradually unveil truths that will enable one to respond to the inner teachings of nature; they will disclose to the soul a personal interpretation and revelation, will answer the problems of life and result in true illumination—the awakening of the Higher Self, through which spiritual things are spiritually discerned.



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## THE GLEAM





## AN AWAKENING

AMONG the precious treasures of youth there is none more sacred and incommunicable than the first moment of spiritual consciousness. It is the initial step taken in "the flight of the alone to the Alone," as Plotinus expresses it, and as in all great experiences the full import is not discerned at the time.

I recall with vividness events that took place when I was but three years old, and my mother took me upon a journey half-way across the continent. What interests me now more than the mere recovery of scenes and incidents of that journey was the extreme annoyance I felt when my grandfather carried me in his arms to a window to see the sun rise over the prairie; for, as a mere babe, I not only recognized the rising sun as no novelty, but resented the imputation of ignorance regarding it. Memory which was then aroused and the conscious reflection upon my relation to several events which transpired on that visit, were quite different from the deeper spiritual consciousness referred to, and they antedated my real awakening by three years or more.

One evening when I was perhaps six years old, my governess sang a plaintive air which touched



some secret chord within, and I was overtaken by I knew not what, a curious, stifling sensation that strangled me; and hurrying from the room, in silence and darkness I threw myself on my knees, sobbing forth a strange loneliness of heart, not in the familiar words of the Lord's Prayer that I repeated unmeaningly after my nurse each night; nor indeed in any words; only an inarticulate, passionate cry to something outside of myself. The need of intimate communion awakened in that hour has never been silenced; nor was it ever to find satisfaction in human sympathy; but by true instinct, it sought the solitary place, silence, and darkness for its first expression and answer. Probably little was gained from that experience; yet it discovered to me a place of refuge; and as time taught me somewhat of sorrow, I sought my trysting place secretly. Young as I was I began to question if the relief that came was not the result of exhausting myself in tears, or whether peace followed as a real response to my appeal.

Sometime after this I went to see my grandmother, and not finding her at once, I stopped at the foot of a staircase and heard her voice raised in faltering, broken accents as she prayed aloud in an upper chamber. Having once overheard my mother say that my grandmother often prayed for a wayward son, I felt a great clutch in my throat

as I listened, for had I not learned the agony of prayer? I tiptoed away, feeling that I had been guilty of an indelicate intrusion, but marveled that she should think it necessary to pray aloud—and in the daytime; I construed these as vagaries of her Methodist faith. When she came down a few minutes later with dry eyes, smiling at me in her accustomed indulgent way, I was puzzled by her composure; for my season of prayer had left me red-eyed and tremulous for days after. I almost questioned her sincerity.

This, as a personal experience, has convinced me that the soul's reaching out toward the unknown is intuitive, and not the result of training or imitation; for my early youth was wholly lacking in religious guidance, owing to reasons that antedated my birth. My maternal grandfather, a man of Scotch descent and intensely pious nature, was a pillar in the Methodist church and a class leader. As a young girl, my mother attended these meetings presided over by her father, and was called upon from time to time to give her religious experience. Having no convictions of sin nor humble repentances, she was ever at a loss to express herself. At first her father thought timidity was the cause; but as years went by, and the same excuse was repeated, he grew stern and commanded her to give some testimony. In vain did she ransack

her mind for a worthy backsliding with its accompanying act of grace; hers was an exemplary youth of dutiful obedience to parents, and she was herself quite disturbed to find no guilty confession at hand. She stated this unfortunate lack in her nature, and a stormy scene followed between father and daughter, the father saying that, in his position as a class leader, it was unbecoming for his daughter to defy church customs. Her obstinacy was a grave reflection upon him, and he could not urge young members to give testimony when his own daughter refused. My mother insisted that she had no dazzling experience to match those of the sinful elders, and she would not play the hypocrite by inventing one.

Then in the name of religion the erring one was locked in her room upon a diet of bread and water and was visited each morning by her father to examine the state of her soul. After a week's confinement, in a final interview, my mother took a determined stand, declaring that she would neither testify in class meeting nor attend church in the future. This was scandalous heresy in the 50's; nor did she recant until perhaps twenty years later, when she came into the light naturally and happily of her own accord.

She was married within a few years of this revolt, and as my youth fell within the period of

her soul's twilight, no mention of religion was made in our family, nor were we, as children, given any religious instruction in the home. Nevertheless, outside influences gradually surrounded me, for our house was full of devout adherents of many faiths. When six or seven I was allowed to go to the Jewish synagogue at the request of the laundress, to the Lutheran church with the cook, to Sodality with the nurse, and as a rare treat, to the Methodist church with my grandmother, while we were being taught "Hail Marys" on the sly by our governess, who, contrary to strict orders, secretly set forth her religious opinions. She might have speedily converted us to the Catholic faith, so ardent was her proselyting, had it not been that, in a moment of anger, observing that my elder sister failed to drop on her knees at the appointed signal, she incontinently threw her Bible at her when prayers were over. This act of violence was duly reported to my mother, whose special injunction had been that the opening exercises should be restricted to the Lord's Prayer and a reading, without comment, from the Sermon on the Mount. There was a sudden and unexplained disappearance of our spiritual leader, who was replaced by one of guaranteed temper; and we resumed the monotonous Beatitudes, pleasantly varied by the fourteenth chapter of St. John. In reflecting upon this lively

episode, I reached the sapient conclusion that the only difference between Catholic and Protestant teaching was that, under the former, one drops on his knees directly in front of where he sits and looks straight before him; while the Protestant turns around and buries his face in the seat of his chair.

Nor am I sure to-day that the differences between the two sects concern themselves with any less trivial outward details; for in their hearts they unite on all essentials.

The various church exercises—I cannot adopt the usual term, services, for the languid and often indifferent attitude which the parishioner assumes when he sits and listens passively while the clergy do all the work—these exercises, except as a spectacle, left me untouched. I rather liked the picturesque, but meaningless genuflections of the priests, the swift and theatrical changes of their gaudy vestments; though, from the first, a tinsel waxen Virgin Mary (a giant facsimile of my last Christmas doll), tawdry saints, and a papier-maché Jesus were shocking vulgarities in an otherwise beautiful and solemn atmosphere. I never heard any one comment upon them; but they were so offensive to my sensibilities, that I used to hurry past them with averted eye as spiritual indecencies, though I lingered with unfeigned delight before wooden Indians in front of cigar shops, and found attraction

in the lay figures of the clothier and wig-maker. After a lapse of twenty-five years, when visiting a cathedral in Montreal, again I felt the old æsthetic nausea and revolt against the monstrous display of images and cheap relics exposed for sale in side booths as if it were a huge toy shop or church fair, appealing to vulgar curiosity and greed. The temple was made "a den of thieves."

I enjoyed, also, the excited gesticulations of the Methodist clergy, the pacing to and fro (in my innocence I thought it the true frenzy of eloquence, and not a mere pulpit trick), and I always feared that the platform would prove too small a confine for the nimble-footed exhorter. One might easily fall from grace, but the most rampant Methodist was never known to fall from his pulpit.

The oftener I heard the conventional injunction: "Let us pray," with its weary preamble minutely prescribing God's attributes in the terms of man's limitations, and the impertinent advice given to the Almighty regarding what he was expected to do for mankind during the coming week, the further from religion as I saw it, and the more precious became the memory of that passionate outpouring of my own heart in an hour of darkness in the silent chamber. These first tokens of an inner life, and unconscious comparisons accentuated the loneliness and sense of separation that grew upon me;

for, though a member of a large family, I seldom shared in their interests or play. My one joy was to go apart to watch the setting sun. Motionless and filled with a nameless rapture I would stand looking at the splendor until it faded; and great was my delight and surprise one morning to observe for the first time from the same window the sparkling reflection of the rising sun on tall buildings three miles distant. It was a glimpse of a magic city. From that day I kept a dual tryst with the sun, also with rainbows and with clouds by day or night; but these were never mentioned to any one, nor shared in by my sisters.

When I was perhaps seven I made a wonderful discovery that has never lost its charm; at this moment it claims my interest as of old. Playing with a younger sister, I asked her if she could match a grass blade that I held in my hand; if so, that I would take four of them. All the afternoon we compared grass blades, but in each I perceived minute differences. The next day, and for many days, I resumed the quest alone, but in vain. Then I tried to match leaves and small pebbles, yet never found exact duplicates. This gave a new turn to my study of natural objects, and quickened a close observation of plants, flowers, and stones; and the more I looked, the more I became absorbed in the beauty of nature. I noted much, but

without reflection; and through a life-long acquaintance with this infinite variety in objects I came to see, at a later day, convincing evidence of the presence of Spirit in matter. Being very near-sighted, I had to examine everything at short range, and consequently drew very near to the heart of things. Color, form, number, and arrangement were gradually revealed to me; but the sky was, and ever has been, my deepest joy.

Naturally these intangible pleasures did not appeal to my companions, who loved to eat and handle things, and I early learned to create a world of my own, where I lived apart, with no interest in rolling a hoop, or jumping a rope, or playing games as other children did. I seldom joined them, but more often sat alone on a curbstone watching others play, wondering at the zest they found in noise and action. I craved companionship on my own terms, but knew not how to win or to use it.

I had observed the pleasant, familiar way that my older sister talked with and amused the servants at times, and I envied her easy address, and once only I essayed to imitate her. To this day I remember my awkward attempt at friendly speech, which ended in my blurting out very personal comments upon the cook's red face, and the housemaid's freckles; and to complete the fiasco, for I had a sickening sense of failure, I was told



to "Run along, your mother wants you"; but the mortification of being summarily dismissed—by the cook! It was long before I recovered from this chagrin, and I felt that a new and insurmountable barrier had risen; I was acceptable neither to children of my own age nor to the house servants, and I could not endure the condescending attitude of my elders, who confined their conversation with me strictly to inquiries how I was getting on at school. I longed for association with grown-up minds, instinctively knowing that mature thought and terms of equality alone would satisfy me, and I began to look upon my youth as a trying period to be lived through somehow; and during the long years that have since intervened no other solution of my forlorn childhood has presented itself than that arrived at when only a child of eight.

For years I was pursued by the conviction that I was living in a bad dream, an illusion from which I should some day awake to happier conditions. My dreams at night were so much more vivid and beautiful that I doubted my waking hours; the night seemed the normal and real life, and the day existence but a distortion of it.

It was about this time that I overheard the servants discussing my frail constitution, and one said indiscreetly that my mother never expected me to live to grow up. I stopped in the middle

of the room, arrested by her words. I die! Impossible! I scorned the mere idea of it, and felt the conviction of imperishable life within me. Never having seen a dead person, I wondered how one would feel to grow cold and be laid underground; I felt suffocated by the thought, for I conceived myself as remaining enough alive to reflect consciously upon the situation; which proves to my mind that neither youth nor age finds it possible to credit the annihilation of the ego.

I took a base advantage of this foolish remark; for, with delicate lungs as the result of pneumonia when less than three years old—and well do I remember the illness—when I thought my mother was watching me, I would cough with much ostentation of suffering, with the desired result. My mother, thinking I was not long for this world, gratified every whim, and I used this vicious little cough as a final strategy to get any forbidden thing. Another morbid consequence of the remark was that it led me to play at dying with my sisters. I would insist that one of them should cough and groan and writhe, in conformity to my idea of what the death agony required, and gradually lapse into stillness; and after a discreet pause, I would declare, "She is dead!" yet I never came any nearer to an understanding of the great mystery.

Added to the cough was one incident that

alarmed the family. I was not well, and was lying in bed one evening, alone and wide awake, with the gas half lowered, when, to my amazement, I saw the apparition of a beautiful woman clothed in white and shining garments, standing in the doorway. I was speechless from fright, but watched the figure for several minutes, and then covered my head with the bedclothes. My mother believed it a sure omen of death, though the physician said it was probably due to a dose of belladonna. I was never satisfied with the doctor's opinion, especially as I saw the same figure twenty years afterward one evening while engaged in a very serious conversation with another person in Central Park in New York City—the last place one would expect a heavenly visitant to ramble. The figure stood motionless as before, about fifteen feet distant, and it was not until it vanished that I realized that I had been closely watching it for some time. It takes considerable experience for one to be conscious at the moment of subjective states of mind.

One other event occurred at that early age which really frightened me. One day I was standing before a mirror, fastening a button, looking casually in the glass, when my attention was riveted on my face in the mirror, and it became strange and unfamiliar. Suddenly I was aware of my dual

nature, that I, the true observer, was something quite apart from the child body which I saw before me; that I, the real self, looked out through its eyes, and observed my tenement just as one looks out of a window at objects in the street. I fled in terror and dared not speak of it; nor did I know that others had a similar experience until I read that both Alfred de Musset and George Sand had felt it; and it was years before I grasped the meaning of a conscious separation of body and spirit.

Abnormal as this sort of childhood may seem, it was wholly natural and unaffected and not the result of suggestion. No one was allowed to frighten us with threats of bad animals or weird tales; and indeed, no one read to me, for I learned to read when only four years old. Lightly passing over Mother Goose and nursery stories as too trivial, I soon found an inexhaustible world of wonder and fancy in Irving, Bulfinch, in Greek and Roman mythology; and, discriminating between Grimm and Andersen, swore immediate allegiance to Andersen as having a lighter touch; in Tennyson's *Idyls* and *Maud*, the latter I did not understand until the sixth reading; but best of all were *Tales from the Alhambra*, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, and a little handbook on natural science, which, at the age of seven, I learned to love because it revealed pictures of flowers unknown to me.

The one thing for which I am most thankful is that my reading was without suggestion or restriction. I roved far and wide and covered incredible ground in a few years. Having only the best to select from, I knew no other.

## A STATE OF SIN

WHEN about ten years old I had a great liking for walks and drives to the woods, where I gathered many plants; and, having a tender love for living things, I could not rest, on returning home, until they were set out in the ground, or put into water. The enthusiasm of these journeys, and the subsequent obligations exhausted me greatly, and exhaustion of body has always left me open to deep depression. Doubtless it was in one of these despairing moods that my governess heard me crying softly to myself in my own room early one evening. She was a pious soul who had lost her lover in the Civil War, and had found consolation in active forms of religion. Though she had been a member of our household for two years, she had not addressed me on the matter of my soul.

This particular evening she slipped in before I was aware of her presence, and sitting on the edge of the bed, asked me what was the matter. Sympathy has always had a damaging effect upon my self-control, and the lump of self-pity grew so big in my throat that I was unable to answer.

She again questioned: "Are you ill?" I shook my head, for I was beyond speech.

"Does your head ache?" Being sound of body, though low in mind, again I shook my head. "What is the matter, then?"

Silence ensued, for I had not the slightest idea of the reason of my outbreak. These two common causes of childish woe being eliminated, her touch grew more gentle and beguiling as she smoothed my hair; then she bent over me, whispering softly: "Is it for your sins?"

While I had never thought of things in that light exactly, the suggestion was novel and quite plausible, and I wept again. She waited patiently, and by and by asked if I loved Jesus.

Inasmuch as Jesus was to my mind a very hazy, historical figure, not half so recent nor lovable as King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, who were then absorbing my attention, I was not prepared to say; but my continued silence was encouraging; and, believing that my soul was trembling on the verge of conversion, and needed help in its birth hour, the kind lady lighted the gas, and read here and there promises from the Bible to those who truly repented, and then knelt in prayer for me. This last touch was quite convincing, for I had never been openly prayed for, and I thought her diagnosis and intervention very satisfying, and

placed myself at once in the class with my wayward uncle and sundry heathen in danger of torment, and felt grateful for her timely rescue.

For days I went about with a joyous sense of guilt in my heart. I was a sinner, and Christ had died for *me*! One is always encouraged to place a flattering emphasis on the pronoun. Yet, after a time, I vaguely felt that something was lacking—at first I did not know what—but it was sin!

Although self-examination failed to discover it, yet, by a little reasoning, I proved my point: I must be a sinner, for was I not sinning in not being uncomfortably conscious of guilt? I regret to say that neither then nor later have I subscribed to Adam's entailment upon the race. I suppose it was pure selfishness on my part to refuse to shoulder his sin, but I have felt sufficient responsibility in meeting my own lapses; and as far as I am concerned, Adam will have to shift for himself.

Then I found another embarrassing omission: I had not experienced the joy of salvation, though I was in a pleasant state of expectancy; surely things had got sadly mixed in my case—no sense of sin—no joy of salvation; then mine was no genuine case of conversion, and I must still be an unsaved sinner. Thus I reasoned in a circle until I reached a point of genuine unhappiness.

Meantime my governess watched my growing



melancholy with evident satisfaction, believing it to be a sign of the working of grace, and she brooded over me very tenderly, rejoicing as over a first fruit of the spirit; but I secretly resented her vigilance and felt that neither she nor the Spirit had been wholly successful in the work of rescue, and until I could see things more clearly, it was best to avoid any further tête-à-tête with her.

How unprepared is the youthful mind for the onslaught of the missionary; and because of its very innocence, how readily it yields assent to the insidious suggestion of contrition for sin, as yet uncommitted!

I was so adroit in avoiding any private interview with my governess, that, in the months that elapsed before she left our employ, we never resumed what was to me a distasteful subject. She followed me with the question in her eye and trembling on her lip, but I never permitted its utterance.

A year of easy security elapsed, when my guardian angel overtook me on the street one morning, and in the single block that we walked together—for I fled at the next corner—she made good the lost opportunity, and asked me point-blank when I intended to join the church. As I had come to view her monologue—for it had certainly not developed into a conversation, owing to my vocal disabilities on that memorable evening—as an unwar-

ranted presumption, I resented this further invasion of my inner life, and answered vaguely.

Is any touch delicate enough, or is human sympathy sufficiently penetrating, to approach a mind just awakening to a consciousness of its inward workings, without wounding and retarding its progress? Growth is mysterious and sacred. Once I sought to open very gently, but forcibly, a water lily that had closed before I had a chance to make a sketch of it, and found it impossible. The next morning all the other lilies had unfolded naturally in their snowy perfection save the one I had tried to force, and there it floated bruised and blackened and hopelessly mangled by my too eager fingers. Does not the prying hand of the zealous proselyter thwart the natural development, and give a false direction to a budding soul? The sad part of it is that the results of these unconscious brutalities never recoil upon the offender; they arouse sensitive youth not to any real self-knowledge, but to a premature, morbid self-analysis. For several years I suffered the full reaction from this spiritual shock. I greatly felt the need of a conviction of sin, without any consoling assurance of that much-to-be-desired state. Until that was achieved, I believed it impossible for any one to expect either peace or spiritual progress.



## YEARS OF WANDERING

THEN followed several years of wandering, desultory and unprofitable. Memory takes me for a brief time to an upper room over a public building where a small group of United Presbyterians met. It left no discoverable deposit in my mind. Then I found myself for two years accompanying my father to the Episcopalian church. This was a self-exacted penance on his part for having made light of a younger brother, who was about to take orders in the Episcopalian church, when the youth was drowned. To make a tardy reparation for his scoffing, my father united himself with the church he had so harshly criticised, and I dutifully attended him.

At first I was deeply interested in the comprehensive way that the Book of Common Prayer covered every possible need of mankind. It was a pleasure to see that all conceivable disaster, misfortune, or event had been ingeniously anticipated and provided for. But the recurrent responses of the Litany teased my ear, just as a too-obvious, recurrent rhyme in poetry has always done; and before many months my attention roved from the

beautiful but monotonous liturgy to interesting observations of the way my neighbors conducted themselves at prayers. There was one loudly insistent voice—a woman's, of course—that rose above and preceded all others. She was of an up and doing temperament that would brook no dawdling before the Lord, and she tried to set a livelier pace by finishing any given sentence at least eight words in advance of the drowsy congregation. I can only guess what a quick-step she would have made of the Doxology or the benediction, if she had worked her will. I have visited churches in many cities, and I believe every congregation furnishes exponents of energetic worship. Is church discipline a dead letter, or how does it happen that this species of offense is allowed to flourish so widely?

I can conceive of nothing more difficult than for a clergyman to put red blood and sentiment into sentences that he is pledged to repeat without variation, under all conditions and in all weathers.

The benumbing effect of habit upon average rectors is obvious; they drone along in a horizontal voice that never by any chance rises to spiritual exaltation, nor descends to pathos, and often degenerates into an unintelligible mumble. An exception can be made in a single sentence into which most rectors try to throw real feeling: "By thine

agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy death and burial." With the exception of strident devotees, the average congregation of the Low Church reflects the level monotony of the chancel in responsive readings. One thing saves the day for the formal worshiper—a glittering ceremonial service with vestments and choirs, with dramatic action and picturesque grouping that keep the eye and mind alert. One can readily understand how a conventional mind, which does not approve of spontaneous expression in worship, may find æsthetic pleasure in ceremonials designed to touch the imagination; which satisfaction must not be mistaken for genuine religious feeling. Humanity that is left dull and yawning under an unadorned and abstract contemplation of Deity, can quiver and thrill deliciously under pageantry. Emotional excitement and tears are no evidence of spiritual exaltation: we can indulge in these over the best-selling novel. A simple test of the sincerity of our religious fervor is to ask ourselves if we reach a state of adoration and intimate communion with the Spirit when alone in our chamber; or do we need the lust of the eye and the ear to raise our temperature to a worshipful point?

I do not hold ineffectual rectors responsible for any unfavorable impressions. They were the result of my own temperament and personal feeling, and

I could not but observe that some were gently lulled under these monotonous exercises, and others found manna where I went away empty-handed. This is one of the most convincing arguments of the necessity of many religions in the world. Every thirsty heart may fill its cup at some fount, though it may turn from many accepted sources before it finds its own.

Once in my life I was present where the psychological possibilities of prayer were understood. It was during an evening meeting in a great church in New York City, when after a short but eloquent sermon, the clergyman said: "Let us pray"; and every head was bowed. No word broke the silence, and those waiting for the usual platitudes were confronted with their own souls. At first I was abashed at the unexpected encounter with mine; then pent-up longings and needs, that all my life had been untouched by the common public prayer, the soul hunger for righteousness, for the living God surged upwards: and still the silence rested upon the waiting multitude. Again I was stirred as in my first childish prayer; and when the agitation became almost intolerable, fraught as it was with startling revelations, the choir sang almost inaudibly a tender, beseeching hymn of a single stanza. Again the silence; and at length the clear, sympathetic voice of the clergyman besought the

Spirit to reveal itself to each waiting heart, and to answer each one according to his need—and that was all. But it was enough to rekindle my soul-flame; and hope that had flickered almost to extinction, in spite of twelve years of nominal membership in an orthodox church, leaped high, consuming all barriers of doubt and hesitancy, and renewed the old desire for utter consecration to the Most High; and even now, after twenty years have passed, memory recovers something of the profound emotion of that hour.

The alone loses the way in its flight to the Alone amid mad snatches from operatic music, the endless verbiage of an arrogant pulpit and vociferous choir, which bewilder the wanderer. Wise are the nations who teach little children to go apart reverently each day for a brief season to listen—listen silently, and wait for the Voice within to speak. No requests are made, no selfish prayers are uttered in these periods of meditation: the sole object is for the child to reach out through its Higher Self, and enter into personal communion with the Spirit, receiving truths—not importuning gifts.

At the end of two years I grew so restless and inattentive that I begged my father to try some other denomination, in much the same mood that an uncured patient seeks a new physician. I had now made trial of the Jewish, Catholic, Lutheran, Meth-



odist, and Episcopalian forms of worship, without finding Him whom they worshiped. At my suggestion we visited two prominent bodies of the Presbyterian faith; and, on hearing the clergyman of the second preach what I considered a convincing and eloquent sermon on predestination, I decided forthwith to pitch my tent under his tabernacle. Predestination is not an alluring word to most people to-day, for it is unpleasantly associated with the idea of damnation, and the elect are careful to gloss over and avoid a topic so full of odium. I was not concerned with the human application of this harsh dogma, but glided comfortably around its rough edges, and saw in it what I wished to see—a doctrine setting forth the omnipotence of God, and His control of the universe through immutable law. By nature I leaned toward fatalism—the inevitable life that each individual must live out for himself in conformity to his personal needs and capacities. That it should be otherwise would be to violate all law and order; and I was delighted, and not a little complimented, to find in any church a good stiff doctrine that seemed to uphold my favorite belief. As an offset, probably, on the following Sunday the contrary doctrine of Free Will was promulgated; and for a time a mental chaos followed until I sorted over the various new

Spirit to reveal itself to each waiting heart, and to answer each one according to his need—and that was all. But it was enough to rekindle my soul-flame; and hope that had flickered almost to extinction, in spite of twelve years of nominal membership in an orthodox church, leaped high, consuming all barriers of doubt and hesitancy, and renewed the old desire for utter consecration to the Most High; and even now, after twenty years have passed, memory recovers something of the profound emotion of that hour.

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the damnation of infants. I have often wondered what the self-satisfied clergy would think if they knew the exact estimate and appraisal of the pew. Protected from public controversy, safeguarded by traditional courtesy, they have no means of knowing that their supposedly unanswerable arguments meet their worst defeat through private unexpressed heresies. It is a strange warfare, in which the enemy makes no charge, but quietly disperses of its own accord.

One may well ask what was done with the Christ if redemption was eliminated. He still remained the great, beloved teacher, guide, and example, yet not the only one; for I found that there had been other great teachers, also much loved and worshiped by millions of devout men, and that knowledge was disconcerting. Then it was not true that the world had been left in darkness until Christ came. These are the tiny rifts that make wide cleavages in our faith. The pulpit claims too much—more than it can substantiate.


A keen sense of justice prevented my accepting the sacrifice of Jesus. Everywhere in the natural world were clear evidences that swift penalty followed the breaking of law, whether the offense was wilful or through ignorance. I could not see how a moral offender was to become better if he weakly shirked his legitimate punishment.

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I hated a coward, and early made up my mind that I was going to save Jesus from any responsibility for my weaknesses, instead of his saving me; I would take them directly to the Father, and bear the brunt myself. Without dodging the question, or thought of irreverence, I made short work of the remission of sins; nor did the ecclesiastical statement of the Trinity trouble me much: it was a curious and interesting combination, like an acrostic; and the favorite trite illustration of three cents being a single coin seemed a feeble and unworthy interpretation; for no one attempts to separate the units of a coin and pass any one of them as full currency. If the teaching had been of Three Aspects or Manifestations of Deity, it would have been an intelligible statement; but to speak of Three Persons in one, making the indivisible divisible, and each part equal to the whole—certainly such a theological paradox was not for the solution of babes and sucklings. Sects are not satisfied to limit themselves to simple statements which make an universal appeal; but in their attempt to explain and justify untenable points of differentiation from each other, they retreat before the persistent questioner until they edge too near the precipice of absurdity, and when they jump off into space, instead of falling flat and picking themselves up

again, they claim that outside and beyond the range of human reason they stand on firm ground that only the sublimated eye of faith can see. It is small wonder that we who sit in the pews, and have dull eyes, retreat to a point where faith and reason can sit safely and comfortably on the edge together and speculate about the possible heights, as well as depths beyond us, and yet decline to make the actual leap. In spite of many heresies, one thing did absorb me—a growing conception of Deity, a spirit of praise of His handiwork; other phases of the God-head were pleasing but irrelevant accessories to religion, much as were the cherubim, arch-angels, the shekinah, the pillar of fire and cloud over Israel.

Again asks the orthodox, how could you go to a church that continually preached Christ crucified, and not take him into account as a Saviour? I do not know how it was, but I did. It is one of the curious phenomena of the human mind that it sees, hears, and is conscious of only that which appeals to it—else we should have the anomaly of philosophers studying cook books, romancers falling among church histories, or saints drifting unawares onto the rocks of agnosticism. My heart sought God, and God alone, and finding a contemplation of Him quite enough, I bore with all outside issues as patiently as possible. On this point it may be



interesting to quote the words of our foremost scholar of Oriental languages, who said to me: "I believe that the only real distinction between men lies in their degree of apprehension and perception of Deity"; a significant utterance that it were well to consider.

In the Presbyterian church, with an educated ministry, one gets much besides theology—and it was the by-products of religion that fed me in those early days. I was charmed by the poetry, the classical allusion, references to past and current literature, the witty or pathetic anecdote, the examples of famous men, and an interpretation of the Oriental imagery of the Scriptures. I loved those delightfully human patriarchs so relentlessly portrayed with their petty weaknesses, their lies, deceptions, tricks, and fraudulent practices; the colossal tales of miracles; though in what way sacred records were superior in authenticity to profane history was not made clear.

When I learned that scholars could not agree upon what was strictly canonical, and that not only passages but whole books were under dispute, I began to question the honesty of the pulpit that proclaimed unswervingly an infallible Bible in the face of accepted disproof of some of it.

These various factors contributed to my intellectual growth at a formative period, and I am

grateful for the gift. That I added no spiritual cubits to my stature under such instruction was my own fault, or rather misfortune; for, under the same teaching, some were descending to their graves full of Christian hope and assurance. It is evident that growth is not affected seriously by either abundance or lack; but it does depend upon a proper assimilation of what is ever at hand when the hour is ripe.

## WITHIN THE FOLD

WHEN I was seventeen I was converted—there is no other word to use than the conventional one. It was unaccompanied by ecstasies, visions, or phenomena. From aught that I could observe, it might have occurred any time in the previous five years, for it came to pass in a very commonplace way. I heard the clergyman announce—as he had done so many times before, with no response from me—that applicants for membership could present themselves before the Session on Wednesday or Saturday of the ensuing week, for admittance on the following Communion Sunday.

I felt again a pang of conscience, now quite familiar, that another whole quarter had gone by without having decided this important subject. On my return home, I went apart, ready to seek and follow guidance, should it come to me. I opened my Bible at random, hoping that light would shine from its pages. Blessed be that Book, which is so thick set with promises of good and peace and love that one can hardly escape finding passages which make a personal appeal to a heart when it is in earnest. On this day I was not disappointed,



for I encountered the eunuch in the desert near Jerusalem asking that memorable question, which was mine also: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" and eagerly I read Philip's answer: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." Then I leafed along to find more definitely what that belief included; and as I struck no passages about sin, penalty—nothing but love and faith, it seemed very easy to see the next step. I was not sure how a candidate should feel; but I knew that the Session would soon put me straight if I were not qualified. So, unencumbered with beliefs, and with but one spiritual asset—the persistent, unanswered question, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" I went before a dignified body of gray-headed men, who received my application in a matter-of-fact way that stripped the affair of all hysterical tendency. They could not have been more business-like if I had applied to them for a position as stenographer, or in the church choir.


I was greatly relieved when they asked no embarrassing questions about a personal indorsement of the Catechism, the Thirty-nine Articles, et cetera. They took it for granted that a quiet little girl with near-sighted eyes and diffident air had no personal solutions to offer regarding the universe; so they asked for none. I was ready to give them if they had, and to abide by their acceptance or

rejection of me. We were discreetly silent on all vital points; and in due season, a venerable man, a Bishop, who chanced to supply the pulpit that Sunday, took me by the hand, addressing me, not by my Christian name when he baptized me, but as "My Sister"; and he has ever been a dear memory for the sincere kindness that thrilled his voice and lit his eye as he admitted me to the goodly fellowship of believers.

For days and weeks I lived in anticipation of experiences that did not come. I did not know that it took an actual sinner to enjoy peculiar privileges. Not being a drunkard, a murderer, a thief, I was entitled only to the languid satisfaction of practising daily virtues, a mild sensation compared with being actually snatched from a life of open sin, and set in a new direction. Not believing in future punishment, it was difficult to understand just what I had been saved from; yet acceptance of Jesus as a Saviour involved some sort of rescue that should call forth a love and gratitude which I could not make real, in spite of sincere effort. By no stretch of the imagination could I view my colorless past as a dark peril, from which Divine Grace had delivered me; and yet it must be so, for was I not now saved? It was very strange and puzzling.

As I now recover my mood, it was one of inde-


finable disappointment at the meagerness of my experience. I had thought of this event in any one's career as a crisis, and had invested it with a false glamour; it seemed unnatural for one to continue school and home duties in the usual methodical way. I expected life to wear new colors, and was surprised that dun gray habits prevailed. Wanting a definite and striking conversion similar to Saul's, I fell into the old habit of doubt if the miracle of grace had been accomplished. Neither new privileges nor new responsibilities presented themselves. No one told me that I expected more than the occasion justified; that only those of peculiar nervous temperament enjoyed psychic manifestations. I alone was to blame that my imagination had accepted literally the extravagant rhapsodies of hymns, and of the Bible, and the high moments in the lives of saints. Daily vision from the mountain top seemed to me the natural state of the Christian—a species of intoxication that lifted one forever out of the humdrum of life. I did not realize that the whole sum of the matter was, that a child, whose youth had been carefully guarded from evil influences, had voluntarily united herself with a body of people who preferred right living to wrong; and that as life advanced, and the mind developed, personal experiences of various natures would inevitably come, in which conceptions of



ethics, morality, and spiritual things would play an increasingly active part, and thus deepen and broaden the character correspondingly, and color one's whole conduct and outlook.

I became a regular attendant at Sabbath school and prayer meeting—the latter a new, and in some ways, a startling experience. The leader of the Bible class was a man much too stout to conform with my ideal of Christian moderation in diet; but he made compensation in a holy tone, with a liberal use of the tremolo stop that worked well with emotional women, and a rapt, far-away gaze of the eye when he discussed the things of the Spirit, which, to a degree, offset his excessive avoirdupois. At prayer meeting I received a shock in discovering that openly avowed sinners had found shelter in the church, and wondered how they had escaped the vigilant eye of the Session. But as my own heresies had escaped them, I perceived that they were a lenient body who admitted goats in the generous hope of their turning into sheep. I judged these sinners wholly by their own confessions, which were uttered with sincere evidences of repentance. I was amazed to learn that they were the deacons and elders of the congregation; for, taking them at their own appraisal, they were in sad need of the mercy of God. When, in subsequent meetings, the same men made the same confidential dis-

closures with the same evident contrition, I marveled that they had lapsed so soon into sins that they evidently knew well by sight; and I wondered why the Session did not investigate their private history more closely. When I first heard men testify to what God had revealed to them I was impressed; but when, on following occasions, they repeated the same experiences in the exact words of former meetings, I was puzzled by God's tautologies. I was in the position of a blind person who for the first time sees objects, known previously only through touch. He has to learn perspective, distance, shadow, color, proportion, and to make allowances for the deceptive gradations of light. Taking each person literally at his word I reached the most egregious conclusions because of applying the logical estimates derived from common daily experience. I was not aware that habits of expression accompany habits of religion; that any deacon can blackmail himself in open meetings in words that would involve a lawsuit for slander if said of him by another. No one seemed to realize the terrible psychological import of reiterations of criminality and debasement, that we are miserable sinners, worms of the dust, meriting the wrath of God. Where one candidate presented himself before the altar because he was drawn by the love of the Holy One, two, or rather ten, went to escape




punishment. That was a day before the consequences of auto-suggestion were properly recognized, and doubtless portions of the Litany and hundreds of equally ill-advised utterances have been directly responsible for the frail moral characters that so thickly stud church registers. Who shall arise and with a tongue of fire denounce the incalculable wrong done to human nature through these abominable suggestions addressed to the subjective mind when in a state of emotional receptivity? Of what use is it to proclaim in the same breath the wrath and the love of God; His omnipotence and the power of a personal devil; the love of Christ and the yawning pit of hell? It is a law of physics that when two opposite equal forces are applied to an inert object, it remains stationary; the law prevails in churches; members who are equally persuaded of love and fear are held in a static condition. So long as orthodoxy upholds what it boasts is a fearless interpretation of the Bible, it need not be surprised to see its really living membership withdraw to a more wholesome spiritual atmosphere.

Oh, the futility and mockery of "A General Confession," in which, after groveling in the dust for past sins, and making a pitiful acknowledgment of no health, misery, offense, and repentance, the timid suppliant lays claim to a promise of restora-

tion declared by Christ, and implores for his sake, "That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life to the glory of thy Holy Name." Such a prayer, if made sincerely and reverently from the depth of the heart, should lift a soul forever from conscious sinfulness; but that it should be uttered by professing Christians fifty-two Sundays out of every year is an amazing and shameful acknowledgment of the inefficacy of prayer. The listener feels that it has a counterpart in I Kings xviii. 25-29.

As I review my own impressions, I perceive that the main burden of religion is in reality thrown upon the church as a body; with an unapproachable God as our ultimate object of worship, still wrathful because of that puerile little affair with the untrusty Adam, and having enlisted Christ as the only successful pleader in so unjust a court of appeal, the individual is released from obligation, and finds small spiritual employment. It takes a brave soul to go directly to a stern God as a brother, a friend and counselor, and commune comfortably with Him. All tradition and convention are against such presumption—if the language of formal prayer, hymn, deacon, and pulpit is to be taken literally.

I found my familiar environment growing spectacular when described by young converts, who de-




nounced "The World" as an alluring peril. Perhaps it is; but I failed to catch a glimpse of that glittering bauble, though, as a youthful member of society, I risked its enticement at card parties, dances, and the theater, all of which were dull and respectable. In the perfervid atmosphere of the prayer meeting I rather enjoyed as a cool contrast the actual memory of these questionable pleasures; there they assumed a fantastic interest, and it was delightful to think one could still live in the pages of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and that *Vanity Fair* flaunted itself just outside of the tabernacle. This feverish protest and distortion of actual conditions not only throw discredit on the veracious perceptions of young converts, but they foster a Pharisaical holiness that is not "lovely and of good report." I have often thought what folly it is to forbid or to denounce any form of pleasure to the young. If a church Session could arrange a carefully selected course of instruction in so-called vices—the theater, cards, dancing, and gambling, and could enforce a nightly attendance for six months, how quickly they could dispel the illusion and prove their weariness and unprofitableness. But the present discountenance of these frivolities gives promise of a zest that is fictitious.

Three things have always remained unaccountable. One is the Christian terror of death. While



one clergyman is repeating with what cheer and conviction he can: "I am the Resurrection and the Life," the choir in the next church may perhaps solemnly chant: "Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound," or something equally inspiring. In all my actual experience with orthodox members, I have never known but two people who regarded the future life as a joyful reality, where the sense of personal loss was swallowed up in rejoicing over the release of the soul from a worn-out body. When they do not mourn with barbaric unrestraint, people reluctantly speak of death with a forlorn hope that there may be a life beyond the grave. Protestant churches present the paradox of preaching the glories and bliss of heaven, yet their members are inconsolable when their beloved ones are permitted to enter upon those joys. The future life is evidently pure tradition, and not a reality to them.

Another unintelligible thing is that people, who are gathered for respectful worship and prepare their minds by means of prayers and readings for quiet receptivity of a spiritual message, should allow the whole effect to be dissipated by the bad taste and unseemly music of an irresponsible church choir. Of all public offenses the most grievous are choir singers, loud of voice, showy of costume, and out of harmony with the occasion. Their am-



bitious presentations of familiar operatic selections strike like a blow upon the sensibilities of a genuine worshiper. It is impossible to conceive of a more atrocious breach of decorum than the wanton destruction of the effect of a prayer, an eloquent address, through these musical flights. Why church authorities, and especially clergymen, whose desire should be to protect their congregations from violent assaults that dispel their sincerest efforts, submit to this tyranny of the unfit, is beyond comprehension. Far from being offended, many of them seem to like the audacity of their singers. Without thought of exercising restraint, they regard extensive repertoires as evidences that they are getting the worth of the high salaries paid.

The thin disguise of setting popular arias and choruses to sacred words does not mitigate the offense. The peculiar beat and measure of the concert hall and theater are not intended to address the soul, but the senses. It takes very small musical perception to respond to the fling and flare of theatrical compositions. The measure adapted to the ballet, the painted chorus, the flamboyant, bedizened star is not calculated to stir religious sentiments; and to set serious words to an air taken from *Madame Butterfly*, *The Merry Widow*, or Italian opera—all legitimate in their own place—causes no less moral shock than to stand a ballet

girl in regulation costume pirouetting on her toes before a congregation, at the same time warbling, "Jesus, lover of my soul." Memory has a strange way of summoning former scenes through the aid of the sense of smell or hearing; and the opera-goer, sitting demurely in the pew, recovers in his mind's eye through the music, the scenic effects, the brilliant, and sometimes abbreviated costuming that properly accompany these airs, irrespective of the substituted words. He gets a mild reverberation of his former pleasure without paying the price; and perhaps this explains why the average congregation to-day is so lenient toward choral vagaries, and flock to hear what they term—good music. Better no music at all than have it defeat its purpose. Seldom are organ selections appreciated, or allowed any part save as an accompaniment; yet our best composers have arranged some of their highest inspirations for the organ; and these rendered upon a fine instrument by a true musician can draw the very heart out of the hearer. Are we losing our taste for music that we ignore so profound an appeal to the heart? Music committees feel pledged to get considerable noise for their money, so probably choirs will continue to play havoc with the spiritual peace of audiences in spite of protest and criticism from the pews.

A third thing that I shall never fathom is the general reluctance to speak naturally and easily of the things of the Spirit. We do not hesitate to talk of great pictures or poems that touch us; of new books, of the beauty of nature, the glory of the sky; but by no chance, and in no place, have I heard the orthodox refer to the inner life, though they agree apparently with clergymen who assert that of all human interests this is paramount. In the street, shop, or over the dinner table, they will discuss other people's creeds, tear the dissenter to tatters, and throw discredit on every faith other than their own, yet any intimate reference to their own soul life is a tabooed subject. There is one exception to this almost universal silence—the impertinent query of the young proselyter who has pledged himself with mistaken zeal in an Endeavor meeting to address man, woman, or child, regardless of age, color, or condition with the question, if he loves Jesus. I have had the life line thrown out to me several times, so I do not speak from hearsay. I have heard young offenders betray an injured feeling in prayer meetings when relating their encounters with the unregenerate, whose ire was roused by these unprovoked challenges. For want of opportunities to do the world genuine service, they invite this form of mortification, calling it a “suffering for Jesus”; and merited rebuffs

are mistakenly charged up as virtuous assets of the intrepid soldier of the Cross, instead of being listed as one of the grave liabilities against the good name of the church.

This may seem strong denunciation of church practices, but I ask you as a candid observer, what you think of them? Is not the church to-day suffering loss because it carries so much dead wood of out-worn customs; because the vine is not pruned and purged, that it may bring forth new fruit?

These were points on which my mind, without conscious criticism, and certainly without comment, had to readjust itself. It was a melancholy disillusionment regarding Christian character. The self-condemnation and platitudes uttered in public meetings are a severe test of the faith of young converts, not yet hardened to empty confessions. Whether members dared not venture beyond conventional limits, or really had no beautiful personal revelations of truth, I cannot judge. Certain it was that no one gave evidence of vision of the kind I desired, else one incident that occurred several years after my admission to the church, would not stand out so memorably. It was during a morning session of the General Assembly, at which prominent divines had expended their best eloquence in such rapid succession that they left a blur on the memory like a composite picture, and

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the entire audience had been reduced to a proper state of spiritual apathy. In the midst of a dreary, unprofitable waste of rhetoric, a few moments were given to remarks by the laity. Suddenly a shabbily dressed woman arose, and in clear, high voice told how the Spirit had revealed itself to her one day and bade her testify for God; and like Moses, she had said that she could not speak, because of her ignorance and fear; and how she was awakened a second morning when the Voice commanded her again; and still a third morning, until she dared not be silent longer. Her broken, illiterate message leaped like a flash of lightning over that vast audience. There was not a man or woman who was not abashed by her evident illumination, her high courage and supreme obedience. My heart thrilled to her testimony. Then it was true that religion was not mere tradition and a dead letter of a bygone age; true that the Voice of God still spake to His children! How the old unquenchable hunger and thirst for righteousness revived, the imperative need of the Voice to speak to me, and answer my heart questionings!




## THE DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN

PROBABLY I should still be in a state of respectable torpidity, with my name upon the church roster, if a few unfortunate things had not occurred. The first took place when under the instruction of my pastor, who was training a class of young people in church doctrines. Something he dropped prompted me to ask if it was true that the church held that damnation awaited the heathen who had not received a knowledge of salvation through Jesus. It was not a generous question to press, for the church had so carefully ignored this delicate issue for a quarter of a century, that the young generation was supposed to be entirely ignorant of its former existence. Although stiff old Calvinism had once thundered condemnation, those of gentler spirit had echoed it less and less vehemently, until, as a tenet, it was practically non-existent in my day. Yet, as it was the logical basis of the movement that was then feeding missionaries into the mouths of cannibals, it must be defended when the challenge was made.

My pastor flinched under fire and evaded; but my blood was up, and I held him to it until I wrung



a reluctant assent to this unspeakable judgment. In my heart I believe he lied to me for the sake of the cause. The enormity of such a teaching was too dreadful for belief, and from that moment I lost confidence in a church that could promulgate so monstrous a misconception of Deity. I know that pulpits no longer openly preach this, and that the pews repudiate it; yet churches dare not expunge from their confession of faith all reference to it, because neither pulpit nor pew is prepared to face the logical alternative. If damnation does not await the heathen, then God has other ways of meeting the problem than through the blood of Jesus; and if this be so, then acceptance of Jesus is not the one absolute necessity for salvation: there are back stairs to heaven. Or again: if hell and its tortures are humanely abolished, then are the death of Jesus and his redemption without meaning or avail; for we are distinctly taught that it was to save mankind from perdition that God sent His Son into the world. Once destroy the thing from which men are to be saved, then the one appointed to save us from that thing is without a mission. The Christian church is established on redemption and salvation, and a belief in hell is the very cornerstone of its teachings; eliminate that, and its whole system of theology must be reconstructed. If hell is retained, it must be



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peopled, for Nature does not maintain idle property; and what is more natural and charitable than to relegate thither those who differ from our way of thinking? The fall of Adam, the consequent condemnation of the race, eternal punishment, salvation through the blood of Jesus—all must continue, or fall together. No wonder the pulpit is hard pressed and dares not utter its honest convictions; no wonder, in this day of critical analysis, that men are no longer satisfied with the inventiveness of doctrinal statement and that the cleavage made is due to common sense, and not to a decline of faith.

Through discreet silences, futile denials, and genuine but unsuccessful efforts to modify harsh doctrines, theology is different from what it was thirty years ago; but does it not need further expurgation? Thinking people do not wish to hold churches to hard and fast lines; they do not want unalterable creeds; they do want consistency and sincerity; they want the church to be so sensitive and fluid in character that it may outgrow partial mistaken statements as time proves them useless; to flow with the changing conditions, and not creak and rend the ecclesiastical heavens should they wish to replace old ideas with larger ones. Churches are not filled as of old; the wonder is that so many continue to go where violence is so often done to

their intelligence and conscience. It proves how unquenchable is the desire in the human heart for spiritual things, that men should seek them weekly in appointed places, when they are not fed. They do not know where else to go; otherwise we should see a still greater exodus. The pulpit proclaims itself to be the one and only way to truth, and the average mind dares not question the statement.

Gradually I fell into a drowsy condition of apathy, not unknown to the average communicant. I made no progress of any kind, nor did there seem to be any goal toward which one could work. What can be drearier than the weekly routine of church twice a day, prayer meeting and Sabbath school, in which one is a dull spectator, and never a participant in the promised good? Nothing came of my prayers, repeated unfailingly night and morning: they were mere habit, and I could not manufacture any fervor when they were so obviously unheard. I used to envy the simple-hearted maidens in German tales, who, when the heart was burdened, would tell their sorrows to the fireplace, for want of other confidante, and always with the happiest results; for some one overheard them at the critical moment, and gave the needed help and sympathy. While a negative state seemed to be very common, yet, in my heart, I believed it possible to have a rich inner life, and I caught

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at every suggestion that might reveal it. Years of futile pursuit had passed before this experience occurred, which practically destroyed my confidence in the church as a spiritual leader.

A well-known revivalist was in my city, holding daily meetings. He impressed the public by his sincerity and eloquence, and filled the largest halls, while hundreds were turned away. I had attended these meetings for some time, and one day he gave a vivid account of the way that the Spirit had spoken to him, calling him to his present work; he told of his hesitation, the final triumph of faith, and the joy and constant illumination that had followed him. Then he made an appeal to real seekers to yield their pride, or whatever stood in the way, and to consecrate themselves unreservedly, and wait for the lead that would surely come. It was not sensational; it was a tender, earnest entreaty addressed to the inmost soul of his audience.

“Who of you desires spiritual growth and usefulness more than all else? Let him rise, and dedicate himself to God, that he may receive the blessing. Who will rise? who will rise?” he asked again and again. I was stirred to the depths, and my heart throbbed fast. This was what I had longed for, and had not yet received in my ten years’ membership. If pride and self-will stood

in the way of a genuine experience, they should do so no longer; and under the wooing of his promises, I stood up gladly, yet humbly, inwardly renewing my vows of entire dedication, and then went home—to dinner. No inward voice sealed the act of consecration, nor did it speak that night in my prayers, nor the next. The heavens were brazen, and weeks of intense prayerful expectancy failed to bring the least token of God's acceptance of my life. I could not believe that nothing would come of this, which was a supreme expression of my deepest being—yet nothing did come; and after months of faithful trust, I fell into a deeper gloom than I had ever known. I had pledged my uttermost, in vain!

Having conscientiously tried the outward profession of religion for eleven years, I determined to see what science, against which the elect were warned, had to say; so I devoured Spencer and Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and others, and about all that I got from them was a benumbing conviction of immutable law, of a wonderful Intelligence behind the universe, a glimpse of the pitiless, indiscriminating operation of indestructible Force, generated from an unknown source; also a united testimony to the inscrutable silence that hedges man on every side—a pleasant anodyne to a despairing mind!

## THE DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN 57

Then I turned to Tolstoy, and in his profound religious gloom I found a counterpart of my own unhappy state; and I read on eagerly to see what was his solution of the purpose and meaning of life; and when his final vision reported that the answer was, "a ceaseless doing of good," my sore and baffled heart mocked at the answer. So this was the ultimatum of life: when you have been sufficiently crushed and cheated and can endure it no longer, you may find joy and consolation in ceaselessly doing good! Yet the sentence remained, burned deeply upon my inner consciousness. My theology that had clung hard to two invincible tenets was now reduced to a single statement—a belief in the existence of God. Faith had been killed by its champions. The possibility of man having a vital and personal relation with Spirit had proven itself but a cheat, a theological lure without reality. For many years I had striven to prove its truth, and now I should blot out the hope forever, and I was thankful that the old torture of alternating hope and despair was ended. Those who thought they had caught a glimpse of the heavens, and were led by a light, were self-deceived; there was nothing in it, and I should no longer struggle for a personal revelation. I gave up reading the Bible, and discontinued prayer. Only those who have gone through a dark eclipse


of faith know its bitterness and depth. There is no sadder chapter in any life than its futile reaching out into the unknown; it cannot be shared, nor be made wholly intelligible to another: it is part of "the flight of the alone to the Alone."

## THE FIRST LIGHT

RESOLUTELY closing this side of my life, I turned to a new occupation of questionable character. I tried doing good—not ceaselessly, as Tolstoy had recommended—but intermittently, and when convenient, beginning with a little mission work. In a pleasant state of self-righteousness, driving in the luxurious coupé of a friend, who accompanied me to the slum districts every Saturday afternoon, we took charge of a dressmaking class. Our work was of no value, except for the novelty it furnished us; for there was behind it a spirit of unconscious condescension that is ignoble in the doer and humiliating to the recipient. I had no other grist for my activities to work on, and I welcomed the work as a pastime, never fathoming the true meaning of brotherhood and service. I had no loving thought of the pupils as my helpless little sisters with as strong a claim to divine lineage as I. I believed myself of different clay, and my heart scorned their poverty and ignorance while my hands cut out and gingerly fitted their gowns. It is a melancholy phase of society that a blasé leisure class has come to look upon the poor and stricken




as their natural prey. Everywhere we see restless women, trying to work out some half-baked idea of ineffectual reform or imitative philanthropy, women eager to remake the world without a thought of their own need of regeneration. In trying to escape themselves, they turn themselves loose on others; having failed to reclaim their own characters, they yet believe they are prepared to meet wisely any case of vice, crime, or poverty. With the best intentions, and a total lack of experience with human nature, they apply themselves with holy zeal, no real sympathy or understanding, and gauge all men by their own narrow standards. They handle delicate situations of temptation, incapacity, and moral lapses much as the woodsman attacks rough cordwood to be reduced to uniform stove lengths. Cases must fall promptly into line and conform to personal standards or meet the consequences of the zealot's displeasure—a withdrawal of funds and patronage. I was still in the Dark Age of my higher perceptions, and labored with lukewarm sympathy, strongly tintured with criticism and intolerance. Though I continued my Sunday school class, my instruction avoided the shoals of doctrine, and no one ever guessed my heterodoxy. These two duties were perfunctory, and in the nature of penance for my genuine indifference to church matters.



Meanwhile one thing had grown to be an absorbing interest—the study of design and its practical application. A natural aptitude for drawing had been cultivated from an early age, when I was given a daily lesson by my governess instead of one in music, in which I showed no proficiency. Later it assumed the form of pattern, and I decided to follow design as a serious study. Living in the middle West, remote from suitable instruction, I encountered insuperable difficulties in getting an adequate idea of practical requirements. For two years I worked alone, offering sketches to Eastern firms, who promptly rejected them without explanations; putting my whole soul into the work, I accomplished nothing, yet was unable to abandon it, though every way was blocked.

One night in great distress over the rejection of my latest work, I yielded to my old instinct, and gave myself up to a passionate prayer for light, asking to be shown the way if this work was to have any place in my life, praying as never before in complete abandonment of personal desire. To my amazement a lovely design of extraordinary delicacy floated down before my closed eyes and remained stationary. I was startled by its appearance, but thought to end my prayer decently before giving it an unseemly attention, when it occurred to me that perhaps the Lord would be good enough



to wait while I got up and made a hasty drawing of the design before I lost it; which I did, and then resumed my petition—in a different mood.

I made a finished sketch of my vision, and was about to send it, a few days later, through the mail, when it was accidentally brought to the attention of a salesman traveling for a large wall paper house. He was so impressed by something in it, that, of his own accord—he was a perfect stranger to me—he wrote a letter to his house that brought to my door, express prepaid, a large box of supplies containing a range of fresco colors, fixatives, a colored sketch—in short, a complete equipment for the work, together with a letter of instructions how to begin.

I was overwhelmed with the prompt and unexpected answer to my prayer. Here was the miracle of actual response, none the less marvelous that it came through human agencies. Nor was this the end; the little design that I had received subjectively was taken at once by the firm that had previously refused all my work, and they asked for others. I do not know which was strangest to me then, the design that had come to me from the Unseen, or the way that it brought to pass easily and naturally what had been so long impossible. Then it *was* true that something yielded to man's importunity! The marvel of it coming un-


mistakably into my life intoxicated me for weeks; I walked on air—and then I wanted another manifestation. Interpreted by orthodoxy, my answer came in consequence of a complete relinquishment of self, a willingness to be guided. Perhaps it did; but there is much more to this subject than is generally understood. An answer to prayer is not in the nature of a gamble, with the odds heavily against the petitioner; but the element of uncertainty is only removed by a more exact comprehension of the soul's relation to its environment than the church has ever vouchsafed. Of this I shall speak more at length in its proper place.

Encouraged by the prompt acceptance and the request for other designs, I went to New York City to study under John Ward Stimson. His Saturday morning lectures brought the first real awakening that my life had ever known. His subject was supposably the principles of art, but he seldom referred to art directly. He spoke of the Spirit in the universe manifesting itself through the material, intellectual, and spiritual media; he showed that one principle underlies all three planes, which are inseparable; that the same laws control each; he interpreted art, literature, music, sculpture, science, and humanity as but different phases of spiritual expression. Always he returned to Nature as a symbol and interpreter of Spirit. In speak-

ing of direction, of line, horizontal, perpendicular, or oblique, of geometric figures, the square, triangle, or circle, he showed how Nature had used these elements, and then gave a further interpretation of their application to art, or life in general.

I remember the flash of his eye when he wheeled suddenly from the blackboard, one day, where he was illustrating his point, and said: "God hath not left Himself without witness in this world; for the invisible things are made manifest and are clearly seen, since the creation of the world, in the things that are made." How I thrilled to those words! Here, at last, was the thing that I had sought so blindly—the living witness of the Spirit in the world to-day. Here was one who dared to break the seal that theologians had laid upon the universe six thousand years ago, declaring that God had finished His work of creation, when everywhere about me at that moment were living evidences that my own eyes could see of Spirit vibrating in created matter, operating through universal laws as truly as when they were first spoken into existence æons ago. How could I have missed it so long—Spirit vitalizing all things, all men, all truth; that there was nothing but Spirit?

It was so wonderful, so convincing that I wanted the exact recipe for his faith, and I sought a private word with him, and asked him timidly to what



church he belonged that taught such inspiring truths. He answered briefly, "I belong to none; I couldn't." It was incredible, so bound is the orthodox mind to the belief that beyond the pale of the church there is no illumination, even though it finds none in it. If no sect taught this great revelation, then I must have more and more of it from him; and I went again in a fever of distress, saying: "I am so stirred by what you have given me that I must have much more, yet my time here is almost up, and I shall probably not be able to come again. Where can I turn; to whom shall I go for further light? I cannot tell you how I have sought the truth; I want it all—and now."

I shall not forget how he turned upon me, saying abruptly: "You do not understand growth. Do you suppose if you agonized all night in prayer to God Almighty to make you thirteen feet high by to-morrow morning that you could accomplish it? He does not work that way; He could not do it if He wanted to—it's against law. 'First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.' You cannot force your growth by feverish desire; you hinder it. All that is yours will come in due season; but you must be patient, and look, and listen." And that was all: yet the door of Nature that he had flung open, though it closed upon me from time to time, became a new ideal; for already I saw

vaguely that through it lay The Gleam, the light upon the path ; but it was a path I must walk alone.

Returning home I pursued the study of design through the help of a very rich collection of art books in a public library. When I began to make a comprehensive analysis of my subject I proved the practical value of a certain experience of several years before. When seventeen years of age I discovered that I had fallen into desultory habits, beginning many things and completing none ; books and subjects were interesting for a time, and then were dropped. I began to watch myself, and was mortified at the evident lack of sustained will-power. It took more effort than I generally used to hold myself to any fixed purpose. Realizing that it would require real effort to conquer this weakness, I determined to set myself a difficult task, preferably uncongenial, and hold to it for an indefinite time. Without asking advice, I worked out the cause and remedy for myself.

History had always been uninteresting, for the reason that it left no residuum in my memory ; so I chose history as my discipline, and then narrowed it to Greek history as being particularly remote and unattractive. Having determined so much, I inquired at the public library for their most exhaustive treatise, and on learning that Grote's *History of Greece* consisted of twelve vol-

umes of five hundred pages each, I saw my salvation in Grote. I set a stint of fifty pages a day, sometimes taking it before breakfast so as to enjoy the remainder of the day, sometimes dallying until ten o'clock at night before beginning it, as one defers a bitter dose; I read nothing else for three months. It was a literal wading through Grote; I caught little of his subject, nothing of his style and erudition—save that he indulged in ponderous words and interminable footnotes of minute type, which were read to the last word; I was bored to death, and constantly turned over the pages, held between thumb and finger to see how much of the day's portion still remained; yet I held to my plan with grim determination to the last page of the twelfth volume. I gained no Greek culture, nothing of the least intellectual value unless one counts as gain three weighty words—oligarchy, hierarchy, and autochthonous—but I did conquer self for all time. The importance of this mastery cannot be overestimated; for, in after years, I entered upon several enterprises that took all the courage and sustained will that could be mustered; then the bone and sinew that Grote had developed held me true to each task until it was completed, and every new work became the easier for the habit of self-control formed at an impressionable age. I did not know what was missed through approach-



ing Grote in this relentless spirit until I heard my husband, who is an ardent lover of everything Greek, remark to another Greek scholar: "I have just been reading Grote for the third time, but I shall not read the last three volumes—they are too sad, the record becomes too painful." So those six thousand weary pages held tragedies and bitter heart histories! It is evident I must read them again with a different purpose in view.

Some may argue that such a method of self-discipline was a waste of time, that a subject of interest would have served better, besides leaving some permanent benefit. It would have been, if my aim had been to gather useful knowledge. I believe, in our evolution, that when the soul awakes, and begins to take command of life, it must assert itself superior to mind and will; and if either be weak or rebellious, it must be roused and whipped to duty; but an agreeable task will fail to discipline.

Through the mental training that I had thus begun, and had now maintained for ten years, it was easy, with an armful of authorities, to devote six to ten hours a day to a concentrated study of design, which included not only a selection and verification of material, but a generalization of isolated facts and an assembling of illustrations of various principles. Sometimes I searched a whole day for a single illustration; sometimes I secured

a dozen in an hour; but never was the quest given up because it was tedious. I made copies with pen and ink, sometimes tracing them to save time, until I had a collection of several thousand little drawings selected from the art of all nations. This exacting work educated the hand and increased the delicacy of my touch. Besides preparing a course of lectures that were given later, interpreting line and form, analyzing many of the principles underlying pattern, such as repetition, contrast, unity, balance, harmony, and proportion, I also made innumerable pencil and water color sketches of flower forms placed in many positions, together with cross sections of stem and fruit. I noted the arrangement and number throughout the plant, trying to catch a glimpse of the Spirit within, always feeling a divine something that eluded my reverent endeavor. Unconsciously I was drilling my mind to a more sensitive perception of beauty, a keener observation of detail, a more careful classification, a closer reasoning and a broader application of abstract truths when, outwardly, I seemed merely to be training the hand to an obedience to the brain. If any one had told me that my work was preparing me for a fulfilment of my heart's desire for spiritual growth, I should have answered: "You are mistaken; I am studying design, historic ornament, which are worlds removed from my deepest

desire." Yet I was being led by a way that I knew not. I was not yet able to penetrate beyond externals; I did not guess the world of correspondences, spiritual interpretations and symbols that lie at the heart of all things. Enough at present was it to handle, to look, and to marvel at substance. With no guide save intuition, no aim except to grasp and apply for myself fundamental principles, no one with whom to share the daily revelations, I studied line and color as exhibited in living organisms, in the mineral and inorganic world, in a withered branch, a fallen leaf, even the mold that accompanies decay. But it was quite another thing to arrange color harmonies, and keen was my delight to find a clue to the secret, when, chancing to pick up a newly fallen acorn, I noted the exquisite range of delicate tones that it held, the light brown shell with its silken fur at the tip, the tender green lining, the creamy yellow coat of the nut, and the ivory white flesh within. The harmony was perfect, and at once I made a memorandum of the precise tones in water colors; and then began a minute and exhaustive study of other objects, in order that I might analyze their color harmonies.

From one thing to another my fancy ranged, and all the time I was carefully recording everything of interest, with a view to placing the results

**in classified order before others. So fascinating was this new world of beauty that I might have spent the remainder of my life in its pursuit, without exhausting its possibilities, had not a very unusual experience aroused me from my self-imposed work and revealed it in a strange light.**



## PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES

ONE morning, attending a literary club, of which I was a member, I overheard a mere scrap of conversation which aroused my curiosity. It was concerning an experiment that a member had just made, prompted by reading an article by William T. Stead in the English *Review of Reviews*. I was too late to hear about the article itself, and did not know that such a thing as automatic writing existed. I must emphasize this; for, in the many unusual experiences that came to me later, experience has preceded knowledge. Explanations or instruction have come after I had made trial of any new suggestion, which, except in this instance, always arose first in my own consciousness. On this occasion I simply heard a phlegmatic woman say that her pencil had written a curious answer to a question she had asked of it; no word was said about the conditions under which one could write successfully, or the supposed source of the answer. Although I had made a cursory study of psychic phenomena—remember that it was almost twenty years ago, when less was known and written on this subject than to-day—

first on the negative side and then from the affirmative, I knew only of hypnotism, mesmerism, the experiments of Charcot, the books of Binet and Sully, and a few instances of apparitions and phenomena recorded by the Psychical Research Society: nothing of an experimental or personal character that I might try myself. But this slight hint promised something interesting, and on my return home I took a pencil, and waited for it to perform. Expectation was strong; and, believing that it could be done, I addressed mentally a person who was three thousand miles away.

At first nothing occurred; then the pencil seemed agitated, and began to move rapidly and erratically, and at length wrote in the clear, ornamental hand of a sister who had died a year previous: "Why do you not tell me what to say?" Thinking only of a possible message from a living person, I was startled and affected by the remarkable similarity of the handwriting to my sister's, which was very graceful, totally unlike mine. On questioning what power was behind the communication the pencil signed my sister's name, and wrote that it was she, and that she had something of importance to tell me. I shall not weary the reader with the messages; sufficient to say that I was first given explicit directions about the necessity of passivity—which I should never have dreamed of using—the

kind of paper and pencil that would give the best results, careful instructions about an easy, unstrained position, favorable time for writing, and many minor details, all of which were practical helps and accord with actual requirements that have risen in the experience of others. As a case, it was a well-defined example of spontaneous automatic writing, with the characteristic feeling of something like an electric current when the hand was under the influence and a total paralysis of the muscles if I persisted in writing when I was told to desist. Doctor William James afterward quoted it in his class-room as an authentic and typical instance of this form of phenomenon.

I think the chief objection to its use, even when it is a legitimate exhibition of this strange power, is that the nervous strain of training and holding one's self in a state of active passivity, or of passive receptivity, if you prefer the term, is severe. The hand must be delicately poised, and hold a soft black pencil resting on the paper firmly enough to make a clear impression, yet so lightly as to receive the slightest influence. It took me many days to acquire control of conditions, and my eagerness to get the words without projecting my own mind into the message, and distress at my inability to practise passivity of mind, as well as body, brought about a state of intense nervous



excitement and subsequent exhaustion. I got much that was inspiring, much that was erroneous—a strange mixture that leaves me still in doubt about its source. I gradually learned to know the different sensations, indescribably delicate, between writing under the influence of this subjective power, and that suggested by the objective mind; yet it was almost impossible at first to distinguish between the two. The answers were wholly unexpected and characteristic of the supposed writer. After a little experience I frequently got the message mentally, less than a second in advance of the writing, but not always. This complicated matters, as it is much easier to remain passively open to influence when the mind is a blank; but it offered unequaled training for the purpose of perceiving the varied operations of the mind and the rapid shifting from the subjective to the objective plane. This exercise was but a first step toward a later development of the sensitive registration of thought in which my mind learned to distinguish between the thoughts that are the natural operation of my own reflective faculties, and the thoughts that come to me from the minds of others—which sometimes have struck like a blow—and a third kind, that comes to me when holding myself in a state of passive receptivity to receive truths from the region of the Higher Self. Of the last


I shall have more to say later. To the average person who has made no study of his own mind these may seem subtle differences; but they are very real. At the time I could not estimate the value of this new kind of perception. Also I gained such control over my mind that I could check, increase, or cut off the current of thought as one controls a spigot of running water. One cannot make any true progress along the lines of spiritual development until he can do this, and much more.

I should not dwell upon the experience of automatic writing at such length, were it not for two messages that it conveyed which had a marked influence on my life. One was delivered only a few days before the power disappeared. I had then acquired considerable facility in writing, when a strange and very disturbing piece of information, of which I knew nothing, was given to me in great detail, and I was instructed to send it to a certain person; which I did at last, with much reluctance. I was assured that it was to receive this special message that my power had been developed. The message was of so extraordinary a nature that it altered my whole later life, and it was no sooner despatched than the power left me; and, with the exception of a single word, of which I shall shortly speak, has not manifested itself for over eighteen years. This episode has always remained a pro-

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found mystery, as I could only judge of the truth of the statements received by the results that followed: I had no proof, and the statements were never denied.

Another incident that was even more disturbing and revolutionary in its effects, though in a very different way, came to me a short time before the other occurred. After a good deal of preliminary writing one evening, my pencil remained stationary for a period, and then suddenly questioned if I felt myself prepared to enter upon the future life. I replied: "No indeed, I am just getting ready to live. I have given years to study and preparation for future work in design, and all that would be sheer waste if I pass out now." Then it wrote: "Your work, that you value so highly, is of no real consequence." I was distressed at the low estimate placed on what had cost so much serious and arduous labor, to say nothing of the joy and new truths it had brought me. "It has no value whatever," it repeated, "for the reason that you are only serving self in it all. You fancy you are working for others, but in your secret heart, you are desiring to do some great thing, something unusual; and in your concentrated effort to serve that end, you are ignoring very obvious duties; you neglect the little things, the small kindness and thought of others: these are what make up the



whole worth of life. These you scorn as trivial and unworthy of your attention; yet they are the only true things, and you have literally wasted your powers and life so far because you have not yet discovered their value."

Mortifying as it was, I could not protest, for it was quite true, though I had never guessed it; and for hours that night I stood before the bar of Judgment and faced my mean little soul with its petty self-seeking, its evasion of everything that was unpleasant, and the par value of my supposed virtues shrank to nothing. It was a terrible hour of revelation, and well deserved. If it came not from the spirit world, it was the intervention of my Higher Self, exposing my utter selfishness and pride; it tore away and destroyed every shred of self-righteousness. It is a strange and wonderful thing to weigh our daily life in the scale of the Spirit, to see its highest endeavor set at naught, to measure the feverish desire of to-day by the cool, impartial standards of the Eternal, to drain off all that is tainted with self and unworthy, and see how very little remains. In spite of many years of active church membership, my life could not stand the test. That was the birth night of a new and higher existence. If the criticism had come from human sources, I should have been angry and defensive; but I stood indefensible before the de-

cision of a higher court, whose verdict came thrilling through my own hand to lay bare my inmost recesses, and I saw myself empty and naked.

Taken as a whole, I regard my experience with automatic writing as uplifting. It placed me in relation with unseen forces and, believing as I did, that I was living in the presence of higher spiritual beings who watched my life, I tried to lift both thought and action to a suitable level. I cannot explain many of its contradictory features, nor do I regard its disappearance as a loss, although for a time after its going I was inconsolable. As a daily occupation, it is of doubtful value; for if the message be true, a person leans too heavily upon it for guidance, and thereby fails to use his own powers of intuition and discrimination, which alone determine his growth and development; if false, it leads to hopeless confusion of mind and purpose; for though its counsel may be obviously against one's better judgment, one is slow to challenge the advice of a heavenly visitant. When of brief duration, I think automatic writing may be a genuine inspiration to that which is highest and best in one; but utterances of this nature must be accepted cautiously; for the average dense, not to say gross, human body is not a delicate recorder of true spiritual vibrations. Between misconception and unconscious interjection of volition, interfering with an

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accurate record, and the greedy love that man has for the undiluted marvelous, the undisciplined subjective mind can and does play tricks beyond belief upon the credulity of deluded mortals. But I must not dwell longer upon this which finds a place in my narrative because through it I was brought to a state of humility and shame over lost endeavor that could not have been produced by any other means.


The years I had given to a close application to color, form, abstract truths, and ideals began to bear unsuspected fruit. When one becomes sensitive to beauty, truth, and holiness, he is sensitive to other impressions. Two months after the incident just described was brought to a close, I had a persistent feeling that there was in the public library a book which was of peculiar importance to me. Again and again I went to the shelves, making myself passive to receive direction; yet with each armful of books carried away, it was borne in upon my consciousness that I had missed the answer. I had given up my old theological problems; the world had grown rich in truths and mysteries, which were all new to me; on every side I was beginning to touch upon the unseen and unknown; I felt that everything had significance, though I had hardly yet begun to see, much less to interpret, the correspondences between the inner life and the outward manifestation. I had realized

an unmistakable answer to prayer that had unlocked the door of difficulty, and gradually I was learning to depend upon the guidance of the Spirit in daily matters. It had taken years to elevate the mind, to make the body sensitive to impressions, but now I knew the tokens of delicate intimations that attended difficult situations. If an answer or guidance did not come promptly, I was content to wait. I had not yet found peace; nor was I always sure when the true answer came; but I was living in a state of reverent expectancy.

When the intimation arose that the library held something of supreme importance for me, I gave myself very seriously, but not anxiously, to the solution of what it was. One afternoon I came across a thin little volume, attractive in dress, that held my fate within its covers. I took it home, and as I read, the heart of the writer was revealed to me in a way that I had never known before. I seemed to know that soul intimately, but not the things he related. Feeling a strong urge to write a formal note of thanks for the pleasure the book had given me, I hesitated at the impropriety—for my rearing had been very conventional—and taking up my pencil that had been silent for months, I desired most earnestly that it should give me advice. Again came the old thrill through the arm, the sense of an unseen power, and it wrote

but a single word, "Obey." Like the Greek oracles, the answer was ambiguous; it could be construed into obedience to impulse, or to the hesitation. As there was no deterrent word, I obeyed—the impulse of that moment: and that is why I am where I am, and what I am to-day. Curiously enough, with the despatch of my very formal note, all intimations about the library holding something of importance disappeared. Evidently I had received and acted upon my message.

A few months later I had a curious experience with telepathy. I was then in New York City, again studying, and a young friend of mine was in the Bahamas. She had asked me to send her a message—anything I chose—at eight o'clock on a certain Sunday evening. I forgot the promise, and made an engagement to go to church with two friends. As the clock struck eight in the church tower, I recalled the agreement, and said to myself: "You know how to isolate yourself, and concentrate; you can send as well here as if you were alone"—which I did at once, concentrating on the first two lines and a half of *Thanatopsis*. I wrote to her that night what I had done, and got the following word from my friend, whose letter crossed mine. "I forgot my promise until quite late in the day, and then I sat for a while trying to get your thought; receiving nothing, I went down





to the library, and still got nothing. It was eight o'clock before I felt anything, and then I was impelled to walk over to one of the cases, and finally to take out one of the books, and turning over the pages, my attention was riveted on these lines:—

‘To him, who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language.’


Then my interest flagged, and I felt nothing more, and am wondering if those were lines you sent.”

Only those who are reaching out for experiences to corroborate their yearnings for some proof from the unseen world can know what a stimulus such a testimony as this is to one's faith. It is as wonderful in its way as if Watts, Morse, or Marconi, while still dreaming of what was supposed to be impossible, had suddenly stood before the perfected ocean steamer, the telephone, the wireless telegraph—fulfilments beyond their wildest dreams. In itself no single telepathic or psychic experience is final; it is merely one more testimony of mind transcending distances and impressing another mind to a certain action; and yet this phase touches upon a matter of tremendous import. It shows that, unlike the body, the mind does not recognize the

limitations of space and the natural laws that govern matter.

Other instances of psychic powers manifested themselves at long intervals. One was when Edmund C. Stedman, a former neighbor and intimate friend of my husband, tried in vain to reach him by telegraph, and finally wrote him, uncertain of my husband's address, to tell him, that, having sold his property by the coast, he had gone down with his wife to look over the furniture and decide what disposition could be made of it; that, while he was there, the new owner had come down quite unexpectedly to confer with him about matters; that it seemed a most auspicious time for my husband to make the acquaintance of the new neighbor, and he wanted him to come on at once for a short visit. Every detail of this I got clearly in a dream, and told the family and two guests visiting us, twenty-four hours before Mr. Stedman's letter arrived.

Twice, when at a considerable distance, I received intimations through dreams of the approaching death of a member of the family—both of whom were then in a normal state of health; in the first instance it came on three successive nights, at the same hour, with such vividness that I was awakened each time from a sound slumber; in the second instance the conditions of receiving the word



and the cause of death were exactly portrayed two weeks in advance.

The first time I *felt* another's thought was when four of us were sitting in the great old parlor of Jaffrey Cottage; two of the group were discussing Bourget and his contributions to literature, while a third sat behind me, perhaps ten feet away, and I crouched close to the open fire, suffering from a very sore throat. No one had addressed me for an hour. Suddenly I *knew* that my friend, sitting behind me, was trying to treat my throat. I cannot describe the mental conviction that amounted to actual sensation; but immediately I turned around to her and said: "You are treating me." She is not a healer, and had never spoken to me of her power. She replied: "Did you feel it? At first I thought I would tell you that I should try, and then decided not to do so; for if you felt the influence, you would tell me yourself." What does it prove? Nothing of great consequence, except that there is something beyond the perception of the five senses, which can manifest itself to our consciousness unmistakably. If once we grant that there are things beyond normal perception we open the door upon wonderful possibilities. To this same friend who was in a state of great mental disturbance, I wrote last year: "Do you know what it is to rest in the Lord, just as one relaxes and

rests his head upon a pillow at night?" This was early in the evening and my letter was not received, four hundred miles away, until the next morning. In return she wrote, "When you were thinking of me, desiring me to realize Spirit, I *did*, as never before in my life; and that evening, when you were writing, I was simply floating in Spirit with a divine peace so deep that I said to my companion, as I went to bed, *your very words*, that came in your letter afterwards: 'I am resting in the Spirit just as I do on my pillow at night.' When I read your words, I was amazed."

And once more: I have a dear friend to whom I seldom write, and hear from perhaps once a year, or at a longer interval. One May day I was planting some bulbs she had sent me the previous autumn, and my thought seemed to summon her so that she companioned my whole day. I heard from her three days later, when she said that on the same day I seemed to be present with her in the closest intimacy. She did not then know what I had felt about her; but I wrote of it, and added: "This experience makes an old theological point very clear and simple. If you and I, just ordinary, unevolved spirits using human bodies, can reach over fifteen hundred miles and commune sweetly with each other, is it not intelligible that the divine Spirit, with an infinite power of extension of His

consciousness, can manifest Himself to any creature at any point of the universe, if there be a desire for communion with Him? This explains omnipresence and omniscience for me."

Some may say: "Of course these things are mysterious and curious, but they have no practical bearing upon daily life." That depends upon whether one knows how to train and apply his powers. Two years after my marriage I was living by the coast on an island, remote from libraries, and I had an opportunity to furnish designs to a Western mill for Jacquard work. I had no material among my note books or little drawings suitable for their special requirements; and, after working for a few days without results, I thought I should have to give up the order.

A little previous to this I had heard of the breathing exercises practised by the Vedantists, but could get no accurate idea of their exact methods, and I was experimenting at this time with my own lungs, interested in seeing how many other ways there were of breathing besides the ordinary one. In following one of my own devising, I felt an extraordinary thrill run from head to foot, penetrating as electricity and as soft as down, that brought a sense of restoration more complete than I ever got from a night's rest. This was especially grateful to me as I had no maid at the time, and

was often quite exhausted and had to lie down to relax. One day the thrill was accompanied by the vision of a pattern, perfect in detail, yet of the most intangible character, seemingly gray on a gray background, not discernible as an outline exactly, yet clear enough to make a distinct mental impression. It dropped before my closed eyes just as my first design had come, four years before, when I was at prayer; and they continued to drop from day to day, as I needed them, one or more—sometimes until I registered four—and then I would get up and make a little drawing of each, as I could not retain a distinct memory of more than four at one time, and I had an economical mind that did not want good material wasted. All that winter I depended upon these subjective motifs—I was able to sell thirty-five out of fifty received—and the mills wrote me that my patterns were the most beautiful that had ever been offered to them. They were certainly unlike any that I had ever seen in books of design, or had worked out for myself, and were perfectly adapted to my use: all that I had to do was to make a small record of them, and enlarge them without any alteration to a working pattern.

I never received them after that one winter, though later I often tried to use this lazy method of getting suggestions. I think this goes to prove that

by training our so-called subjective powers we can tap a reservoir of original ideas that surpasses the operation of our common, everyday mind. By a systematic development of the gift we might increase both the quantity and quality of any work in which we are engaged. I do not commend breathing exercises unless one is under instruction; for when we draw higher forces into bodies not attuned to receive them, we may do ourselves irreparable harm. It has led to madness in some cases; in others, to a nervous breakdown.

In that same house and room where I received my designs, I was frequently seized with a desire to write poetry, preferably sonnets, the most difficult of all forms of verse. As I had never evinced the slightest poetic faculty before, it was quite annoying, when settled for an afternoon nap, to have complete lines, sometimes a whole stanza course through my brain and tease me until I got up and wrote them down. It seemed as if I were *en rapport* with a stored-up energy lodged in that house where its owner had spent thirty years in concentrated study and writing of verse. Who shall say how much of our daily mood in any given environment is governed by the thoughts of former occupants? If we are sensitive and unaccountably unhappy, it is worthy of a serious investigation.

I do not claim to be a psychic, and my experi-

ences have been few and at long intervals. I do not think it well to develop such power prematurely, nor to dwell unduly upon its exhibitions. When they come naturally and unsought, they have an interest, and should be looked upon not as conclusive, but as significant. They are lawful when they lead us to higher interpretations. They are not finalities, but merely tokens of still greater manifestations yet to come.





## REAL APPRENTICESHIP

TOWARD the end of the same year that my experience with automatic writing occurred, I came across a writer whose books were to give a larger meaning and purpose to life. It was Prentice Mulford, who prepared the White Cross series. In spite of his crude journalistic style and needless repetitions, this man has something definite to say, and his very reiterations drive his ideas home to the reader. Long experience as a journalist in gathering news of disaster and crime convinced him that one's habit of thought influences the life and career; also that thoughts are living entities; that desires are potentialities; that self-control both of body and mind must precede success and usefulness. He does not explain and analyze: he affirms, and urges the reader to prove the truths for himself; he gives simple exercises, beginning with the tying of the shoestring in the morning, sitting in one's chair, or walking to one's business; he preaches against hurry, worry, and fear. On every page he pounds away at his two themes—"Thoughts are things" and the "law of demand" that brings fulfilment of our desires.

He was the forerunner of innumerable later writers who have not one tithe of his inspiration. His books enabled me to put my spiritual aspirations upon a sound, practical, working basis; I could now estimate the value of much of the self-training that I had gone through; the control of the will, the habit of concentrated thought and effort, and of close observation; and not least the acquirement of receptivity through controlled passivity. His teaching gathered up what I had practised intuitively, disclosed its orderly progression and meaning, and now gave it a definite application. Many people have felt as I do, that a new kind of growth began under Prentice Mulford's influence. So different was this series from any other books that I had read, and so comprehensive, I wondered if there was anything left to be said; and yet they were but a beginning of better things. Some books are mental yardsticks by which we can definitely measure our growth. I have had many besides Mulford's, among them two favorites, Balzac's *Seraphita* and Richard Jeffries' *Story of My Heart*. On first reading, they were beyond my experience and full comprehension; but again and again I come back to them, perceive more clearly the meaning, and tally my enlarging experiences with what was before almost unintelligible.

The reason Mulford's ideas make such an appeal

to restless souls is that he gives them genuine work to do. We, who know neither how to store, nor to dispense the gift of energy, are set some very difficult problems when he wakes us up to see a thousand evidences of misuse and waste; we feel as if we must begin life over again, must learn how to breathe, to talk, to walk, to think: many functions that have become instinctive and automatic must be drawn back to the plane of consciousness to be given definite direction—and it is hard work; and the stronger and more energetic the nature, the more discipline it requires. The sanguine or nervous temperament is particularly spendthrift of its forces, through undue intensity, misdirection, and leakage. We may not rock to and fro in our chairs, yet we may twiddle our fingers when we think we are sitting still; we may not rush about and bang doors, and jingle money in our pockets, but we may talk so fast as to be incoherent; we may guard our speech and yet worry our brains by needless rehearsals of unpleasant memories, or dwell upon difficulties that are, for the time, insoluble. It puts our old lazy dawdling ideas of worship to flight, and substitutes personal effort as a new form of salvation. It is busy work to set a guard upon the mind, to place a sentinel over our muscles, to police our energies, to inaugurate and maintain periods of quiet receptivity, to perceive and culti-

vate the first faint activities of the inner mind. But, useful as all these things are, they are but the preliminaries to much greater effort when we attempt to quicken our Higher Self to take full command of life and action. The first is merely the razing of old structures before new erections are possible. I thought then that it was a period of reconstruction; but the time was not yet ripe for actual building: it was but a clearing away of a lot of old rubbish. It is one thing to accept a revolutionary idea intellectually, and quite another to put it into reasonable daily practice. We work, then forget and lapse; and again remember; the old ground must be gone over again and again, and at the end of a month, the permanent gain is scarcely perceptible. Yet we are never the same after we have made any definite resolution. Something within us recalls us to our aim, steadies the purpose, stores up the slight gains, bringing us back in a state of mingled chagrin and fresh endeavor—much like the rising tide with its alternate ebb and flow—until at length all our being is flooded with a greater knowledge and power that abide.

The most remarkable thing about Mulford's teachings is his attitude toward environment. He was the forerunner of the New Thought movement, and was the first to set forth boldly his convictions. On every page he proclaims that our cir-

cumstances, state of health, success are products of our thought; and, to change any of these, it is only necessary to alter our mode of thinking. He introduces the reader to a veritable world of magic where desire is the wand, and the human will the magician. Without deposing Deity, he places the divinity of man on a pedestal. With no desire to derogate divine authority, he exhorts man to recreate his world; he insists that he shall assume another attitude than that of passive submission to the so-called "will of God" when he finds himself floundering under a misfortune of his own making. Over and over again he says in substance: As a child of God you have the right to comfort, plenty, joy, success, and happiness—get up and win them. Your mind has a creative power akin to that of Deity; stop wasting it; use it for your upbuilding. Your belief that you are a worm of the dust is degrading; speak the word of power, and you shall make for yourself a new heaven and a new earth. You do not, of course, create out of nothing; but, by the law of affinity, according to what you are, you can draw to yourself all that you need from the world of matter.

Mulford does not explain that the average untrained person who sits down, and suddenly resolves that he wants a certain thing, will get no results; nor does he define what that higher prin-

ciple within us is, that must be wakened to action if we are to liberate a much greater potentiality than is possible to the lower mind. He rightly urges passivity and desire, knowing that when people begin to reform their life, they are not prepared to understand or to practise the highest teachings. He takes them where they are, believing that if one learns to be silent, the Spirit will teach all things needful.

A book will not affect all readers alike, nor rouse them to the same action; but this is what Mulford said to me; and another truth, offered by several writers, gave credibility to a practical application of his suggestions. I saw the idea first in the small volume that decided my fate. In a chapter entitled, *The Soul of Things*, was this hint: "Musical notes, which make the dust of the earth assume the form of stars and shells and flowers; by an ascending tone, adding a new petal until the corolla is complete; and by a full octave, arranging particles in circles and globes."

For many weeks I tried to learn something more definite about this interesting correspondence between sound and form, and at last I encountered Chladni's experiment in acoustics, where he drew a violin bow across the edge of a glass disk upon which sand was strewn, and his discovery that the vibrations seemed to possess a creative power in

attracting the scattered particles toward a center where they arranged themselves in forms upon the disk. Reading on, I came across a magazine article, written by a singer, who carried the experiment still further by placing a membrane across the mouth of a retort, first coating it slightly with a viscid liquid, so as to hold the sand better. She sang one note after another into the receiver, beginning with a low tone, then increasing in volume, and then diminishing the sound until it died away, and watched the sand quiver at the sound and gather toward a center, from which petal after petal was put forth until the form of a flower was complete; and likewise, by drawing in the note, it would slowly recede to the center and disintegrate; thus she discovered that various notes arranged themselves into the likeness of different created objects, which were photographed—many flower forms, shells, ferns, trees, glimpses of tropical growths, even reptiles—all appearing in obedience to the spoken word.

Then the miracle of creation became intelligible, for one can understand it as a literal fact, that, when God said: "Let there be light"—there was light: also that dark saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Man is not merely a creature of physical needs; but he shall draw his



life and energy from the whole world of created objects that have been uttered into existence.

So I found Mulford on one hand, proclaiming that thoughts are things, words are entities, that affirmations may be manifested, and on the other, three writers corroborating that the sound proceeding from an instrument, or the human voice, manifests a certain creative power visible in its operation. And to these was added Mulford's remarkable statement of the law of demand. Surely this was a philosophy to appeal to youth, eager for active service: I longed to live it and prove it; but I did not realize that the first necessity for a desire to manifest itself in fulfilment was a positive, crying need, a lack; also that when I was putting forth an imperative desire for proofs of these remarkable statements, I was then drawing myself into conditions where they would be fulfilled. Although I knew it not, already I was playing the unconscious creator of a new world, a new life, and larger activities through the urgent law of demand.

Early the following year I married, and went into the country to live. Which phase of the new life was of the greater importance I cannot judge. It is wonderful to the city-bred mind, inured to stone pavements, scant patches of blue above the sky line of houses, the ceaseless roar, jostle, and confusion, to be brought close to the miracle of

creation in the natural world; to be dropped into the intense stillness that attends Nature's operations; to see the sun shine from dawn to twilight, without going into a mid-afternoon eclipse behind somebody's roof; to mark the uninterrupted procession of the stars, wheeling into view, and making a noticeable progress through the heavens in a single hour; to stand as an observer, and see the rise and fall of Nature's empire each year; to note the miracle of unfoldment of delicate tissues in leaf and flower from the woody stem; to feel not merely the usual grateful warmth, but the vitalizing, pulsating vibrations of direct sunlight, to which something within one expands as never before; to observe the economy of Nature in her use of matter, her cleanliness and hygienic methods; and, by use of telescope or microscope, to enter realms of law, order, beauty, and adaptation to purpose beyond conception. If anything can be more wonderful than these things, it is the regeneration wrought in one's nature through an absorbing love for any one or anything; to learn first the possibilities of true response between two human beings; to measure the depth of another's sympathy; then to see old habits of selfishness melt under affection, and in their place arise the desire to serve all, because of one; to give with both hands rather than to receive; the awakening to whatever is tender,

true, and yearning in humanity, because the heart grows too big to be lavished upon a single object.

Love has done more to open my eyes than all other influences combined; and blessed be those who learn the difficult lessons of life, sustained and fortified by love, instead of treading the upward path alone, and in darkness. Three things have I truly loved in my life: one man; and because of him I honor all men the more; one dog; and through him I have since looked into the eyes of other dogs with a deeper comprehension of the tie of brotherhood that includes even lower animals; and one bit of land; and, because of the marvels it revealed, every form of life is precious, natural objects instructive, and phases of nature inspiring, as manifestations of the divine.

I went forth into a wonder world, an enthusiastic pupil under a wise teacher, and great were my joy and profit under the instruction. Yet love could not shield me from the lessons yet to be learned, the disciplines still unmet; but I shall ever be thankful that they were taught under the most favorable conditions; and if some of them were hard, it was because I was dull of understanding, and could not perceive their mission.

Being economical of mind and facile of hand, I found the limited purse of the new household an opportunity to exercise my almost unused talent of

creating much from little; and, so far from feeling any restriction, it gave my ingenuity free play. As I look back upon those years, I delight in the genuine comfort, the deep happiness, and comparative freedom that were achieved through our united efforts, on what the majority would consider a mere pittance of an income. We earned little, but we created much. When people are happy and their life full of interests, it takes little to satisfy them; it is only when people are restless and seeking, that things assume a dominant place in their life.

We undertook to make a summer home out of an old abandoned farmhouse, and with neither ready money nor sufficient furniture at our command, it seemed almost as if we summoned things out of a clear sky, as if we had gained control of the genii of the lamp and ring, who fulfilled our wishes. What we required came in prompt and orderly fashion. There was no miracle about it, no prayer to high heaven, no outward mention of our need; but, through natural ordinary channels, results came. Mulford had said that such things were in accordance with the law of demand, though he did not explain the *modus operandi*; nor could I, at that time, though I made a list of more than forty things during the first two or three years, that appeared. I should like to enumerate them, and the actual circumstances under which they ar-

rived; yet a few instances, that would be permissible, might seem like happy coincidences: but when one can recall, as I can, hundreds of them in a period of seventeen years—then it looks strangely as if one were dealing with actual cause and effect.

At first small objects came, of no great value, such as special books, a smoking jacket, laprobe, an oval mirror fitted to a particular space, a feather boa, a glass rose jar, a kaleidoscope, pictures, an East India plaque that I had greatly coveted, a rug for a special place, a tripod for a camera, all manner of personal and unrelated household articles such as a pair of bellows, a tailor's goose, a pair of ice tongs, a brass amphora lamp, portières of velours of an exact color; and pleasing amenities that two people must have in home life, yet are inconvenient to secure when the nearest city is a hundred and fifty miles distant. The interesting thing was that each one proved to be just what we had quietly talked over between ourselves as lacking, though no one outside knew it, and close upon the heels of our expression; then came opportune requests for our special kinds of work, and friends began to smile at the coincidences and to say we "had luck," though we still had no money.

Later when I took up a serious work requiring capital, technical knowledge, and special markets from which to draw suitable materials—none of

which were at my command, all of them were supplied as the need arose; though, if I had depended upon my own efforts, or the methods generally used in commerce, the work would have made no progress. It is not easy, after half a lifetime of dependence upon the paternal purse, to throw overboard worldly traditions and the usual sources of supply; it sounds improvident and visionary to say, "The Lord is all my supply," and then depend upon Him to send it. Yet, in justification of my philosophy, I point to the industrial experiment that I have made, the extraordinary way that it has become known over the country without the usual advertising, the recognition it has won, and the vital influence that proceeds from it; and I say unqualifiedly, the whole enterprise has been fostered and maintained by the mysterious law of demand.

Some have asked why I did not draw an abundance of money to relieve me from further anxiety—a very pertinent and practical question. My answer is that I could not; whenever that thought arose, something held me back, and I knew that it was not lawful for me to exercise the power for that purpose. There are limitations to its use by those who can employ this gift successfully; one knows instinctively what he may ask for, and what is not for him; and if, in defiance of intuition one sets up his will arbitrarily, he must take the conse-

quences. Every one familiar with this subject will recall instances where the fulfilment of headstrong demand brought sorrow and ultimate loss. One cannot wield the power obstinately; a realization entails many consequences that are not anticipated.

To explain more clearly, I will say, that, in my own experience, I have never consciously and deliberately *demand*ed anything: if I thought of an object in that way it did not come. When I first observed that a new element had risen in my life, acting in opposition to accepted ideas, I began to study conditions, and found that things came only when I had a clear mental picture on first feeling the need of them. I never got anything that I did not distinctly *see* in my mind as an image, forming itself without effort, and quite unconsciously. Long after I made an analysis of my own experiences, I found others who, through trained psychic perceptions, were able to explain the actual process; and though the explanation may seem to those who know nothing of this subject more fantastic than the examples, yet it does reasonably account for many facts as I have studied them during the past seventeen years.

Without preliminary argument to establish my premises (which you are free to prove or disprove for yourself), let me say that within man reside several principles higher than his mind, which many

people vaguely lump as a possible soul or spirit. While these principles are almost dormant in the average person, very rarely giving evidence of their existence, they are active in others, and respond to or function as naturally on their own respective planes of environment as the human body with its five senses responds to the physical plane. Just as here, on this earth, one may have a body, yet be more dead than alive in the use of physical activities, so many are in no perceptible degree responsive to the higher planes, because their higher centers of consciousness are still latent.

Where these higher principles are in any degree developed, and whether they are used consciously or unconsciously, they are the source and explanation of many so-called phenomena; and this power of materializing one's wishes—for the sake of convenience we call it the creative power—is only a natural function of the higher principles, and operates in a way something like this. When trained to clear, sustained, and positive thought, one finds the power of visualization increased—in other words, the ability to perceive and hold a mental image. Visualization is not a passive, but a very active operation of the mind. To form that image, one projects his thought, which is a force of high potentiality, upon the ether which is filled with sensitive elemental substance, ready to take



form under the creative force of the mind, just as we see in the natural world, that matter, when released from an old form, immediately begins to assume other phases. An earnest thought or desire, endowed with creative power, in going forth, lays hold of a portion of elemental matter adapted to its purpose, and molds it into the shape of its conception, and what is commonly called visualization occurs: the imagination, which is a faculty or operation of one of the higher principles, actually perceives on its own plane the image projected, and reports it to the objective mind as a mental picture. People with imagination see and hear things as if they were present realities.

If the thought is strong and sustained—and here is why the results of continued affirmations are so remarkable—the thought form or mold gains in coherency and vitality, and proceeds to build itself into a definite entity with the capacity to draw to itself that which shall fulfil its purpose, which is to materialize itself on the lower material plane from which it was projected. Like a boomerang, it has a tendency to return to the sender. The law of affinity prevails on the higher plane so imperatively that a creative thought is linked not only to the sender, but relates itself to the person or condition that makes its fulfilment possible, or to whom it is directed, and also includes other persons

who are sending forth the same kind of a thought—a curious sort of trinity. There is still greater dynamic force liberated when several persons agree to meditate on a certain subject at a given hour; and this theory explains why co-operative thought is so productive. Now this law controls not only desires for definite things, but forcible thoughts of any nature; the more intense the thought, the more active and powerful is the energy set in motion, and the more quickly results are manifested. If a man thinks hate, revenge, jealousy, he is linked by this mysterious bond with other haters, and his thought is fortified and increased by the alliance. He will find himself really hating more than the actual occasion justifies. In the same way fear, anxiety, deep grief or any strong emotion, whether high or low, creates links that bind together many persons unknown to each other. All that a man thinks or feels deeply is thus intensified by responsive influences from the unseen plane.

This theory also satisfactorily explains what so many have found true—that an ordinary languid exercise of will power does not produce results. The exercise of these higher principles, or of the subjective mind, if you prefer the more general term, is not under the conscious control of the objective mind in the average person. It operates quite independently of ordinary volition or con-

sciousness, so that when we try to summon a distinct memory of a face or an event, or to make a mental image, most of us fail; yet when the lower mind is quiet and serene, as in a reverie, all kinds of vivid pictures present themselves unbidden. It is possible to train the higher mind to respond to the will, but it presupposes a severe discipline that few have followed.

If a positive desire is coupled with fear or doubt, it is neutralized, because both desire and fear represent strong but opposing forces, and nothing is produced. If fear is the stronger, it will, by the law of attraction, bring to pass that which is dreaded, instead of what is desired. When one has yielded to a thought that he regrets, he can neutralize or destroy it by giving a strong mental command: "I destroy that thought, it cannot take form." Doubtless many who have never given the matter a moment's consideration, and others who have not applied this creative energy consciously, will scoff; let them once begin to observe their own minds, and apply the advice given, and when fulfilment comes—as it must, if they work under proper mental conditions—let them offer a better explanation, if they can, of a most interesting mental phenomenon. One must remember that in order to create harmonious conditions, he must first control his mind, and

bring about a state of harmony within, and he must be able to direct his thought steadily; for the higher principles are slowly liberated and brought into use in much the same way that the body is developed and is strengthened, by exercise. Do you think you possess mental control? Most people are sure of it until they set themselves the simple task of thinking for five minutes or even three upon any one subject, without letting the mind wander from it for an instant. Try it, and if you can do that, then try to empty the mind wholly so that no slightest thought shall obtrude upon the blank, and hold it thus vacant for five minutes or even two. If you can do both of these—and you probably cannot, unless you have practised long—you know something of mental control, and with further exercise, you can increase it to ten or twenty minutes. When you have gained this mastery, your thought will be strong and dynamic, and you are then ready to experiment with creative energy to some purpose. Study those who represent poverty and failure and you will perceive that they are incapable of sustained mental control; they are weak, vacillating persons, easily discouraged, looking on the gloomy side. Their habit of mind is one of hesitancy, indecision, and regret; the only positive thoughts they create are of a destructive character, taking the distorted form of fear,

poverty, disease, germs, of helpless old age, of loss and adversity in general. They create the rainy day as well as the inadequate provision for it.

Coming back to a desire which expresses some need that is sent out subjectively in a clean-cut, forcible way, it becomes a potential magnet drawing to itself conditions that will give it tangible form, and addresses itself to the consciousness of the person most likely to respond to it; that person has a sudden inclination to do or to give exactly the thing which is desired. Does not this explain the source of supply of many institutions that are run solely on faith? The demand is thrown out upon the ether, and reaches the heart attuned to that special vibration, and, incidentally, the pocketbook of the one who receives the message telepathically, and he responds. Does this method sound like highway robbery, a stand and deliver order to people to comply to our needs? Yes and no. It would be a dangerous weapon if the power were commonly understood and practised by base and selfish persons; for, as a law of the universe, it cannot distinguish between good and evil applications, but works inexorably when conditions are complied with, as does gravitation. When through self-mastery we become superior to things we are like larger bodies of matter, toward which smaller ones

are drawn. The earth does not gravitate perceptibly toward the apple; nor are large fulfillments possible to petty minds that are greedy for trifles. The safeguard lies in the fact that when a person has developed enough to direct his forces intelligently, the chances are that he has also evolved enough spiritually to rise above base temptations to use the power selfishly or dishonorably. The whole tendency of Nature is toward the symmetrical development of man, an advancement upon physical, intellectual, and spiritual lines at the same time; and although we may see persons who give their whole attention to one single side of their nature, they are the exceptions, and we look upon them as abnormal. It takes a trained mind, an imagination under firm control, and a certain degree of development of this higher principle to make success possible: and even then one cannot always manifest his thought, because he does not always inform the mental mold with sufficient vitality. I have made proof of this power for many years, never intentionally directing my thought to any special person to grant my wish—nor to the possible means of securing the result, and yet have received direct evidences hundreds of times of its practical working. That I was able to apply the law long before it was made intelligible to me, was due to the training in con-

centration that I had gone through in previous years.

There comes a time when we no longer need to wish for definite things; by holding the mind in a sustained expectancy of all good coming to us, we draw our own without thought or anxious concern about the daily need; but of this I shall speak again. As I have said, I soon learned to depend upon this storehouse of supply to provide a multitude of things necessary to my comfort and usefulness in a work that I was shortly to undertake, and it has ever proved able to equip me, to provide materials, funds, special information, influence; a thousand things that I should have struggled for vainly were brought easily and naturally *according to my need*. That last I hold to be an essential feature. I thought not of personal indulgences, only needful things; and my life has been a living example of the practical working of the law of demand.

Some pious folk may say that this method cannot be right as we should look to God for our supply, that we should pray for what we want. Well, was I not? To whom was I looking save to the unchangeable One? It does not separate God from direct results, if He sees fit to work through cosmic laws instead of personally directing the small concerns of His children. Having established the law

of gravitation, He can safely leave it to operate eternally; He is not required to pull individual apples from our trees. Once establish creative energy and relate the human will to it, and man is enabled to do much for himself that our limited orthodox imagination has supposed to be the sole prerogative of God. One might as well say that man should not work for a living, but sit in sweet trust under a banyan tree and wait for God to feed him. God has provided a no less personal table in the form of work and its reward; and that work may be physical, mental, or wrought by our higher nature. This new form of creative activity defrauds no one, and its early exercise in supplying one's personal needs is a preliminary and necessary step toward a much larger exertion that man is designed to make, which will be of a more lofty and assertive nature. He must not linger long in the lowlands of self-indulgence; material proofs strengthen confidence in the use of forces, but larger endeavors await the true student. After the first novelty wears off, one uses it less and less for self, and its employment on the material plane becomes largely involuntary; it is consecrated to the service of others, and gradually opens the door upon other spiritual faculties.

The great trouble is that many people do not grasp the purpose and meaning of human life; they



do not see in it the training school of our spirit and its capacities, where we first learn our privileges, and are then intrusted to use them; and that as we evolve, we shall be called upon to perform duties that require the help of the Higher Self, and that, at some time and somewhere, we must be definitely prepared for a great expansion of our outlook; meanwhile here and now, the use of the creative power of the mind is one of the highest spiritual functions on this earth plane, and many are preparing themselves to use it in legitimate ways. Few people regard new and difficult work as a step toward definite spiritual growth; they do not see that, by every conquest, they rise to another altitude; most of us are glad to follow the lines of least resistance; we falter at the first mention of pioneer effort; and the consequence is that the world is full of people of considerable ability who present the flabby mental and spiritual condition that always attends disuse. It is not egotism or pride that prompts a soul to claim and to use its rightful prerogatives. When we stretch a muscle, Nature rushes to the spot material to replace the lost tissues, and always sends a little more than is needed, so that constant exertion produces strong and stronger tissues. The analogy is perfect when applied to the aspiring soul. When it dares to claim divine kinship and reaches out to fulfil its

destiny, more and more light is granted, and authority is extended—provided that it is sought in a spirit of consecration, and not for self-aggrandizement.

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## WORK

AN orderly evolution of the soul is not, as some suppose, in a straight line of progress; rather does it present an ascending spiral, extending outward and upward as it proceeds, again and again coming around to the old questions of life to meet them on another level. As man includes the physical, intellectual, and spiritual, each of these should find a place in his unfoldment at all times. He does not meet the duties of physical life once, and dismiss them when he begins the intellectual side of his education, and then drop both when he awakens to his spiritual capacities. We do see men who are satisfied to live on the material plane; also those who devote themselves to the strictly intellectual pursuits; also those who are professional saints: none of these is a symmetrical being; for any ignoring of the three fundamentals of life is a sacrifice of symmetry. I shall not stop to give examples or proof of this; look at humanity, and see for yourself.

Now there are multitudes of people at this present day who have never known servitude in any form; they are unacquainted with manual labor,

and have been reared in ease and leisure; they have cultivated their minds; they have developed a degree of spiritual energy; and they believe themselves nearing the apex of human possibilities. Some day they unexpectedly find themselves, not merely contemplating, but submerged in the material plane of life, forced to engage in the common manual labors, to serve, to drudge—some call it—and they cannot understand the situation. Tens of thousands of housewives the world over to-day are facing this problem; with ample means, they are unable to procure the servants that they have always regarded a necessity. It is not merely in America; in old countries, where the servant class has been a stable factor in the social scheme, things are topsy-turvy, and women who are both ignorant and incapable in practical matters are compelled to minister as best they can to their households with their own hands. Wearied, disheartened, sometimes wholly despairing, they cry out for the reason. It is deeper than a mere social or economic question—it is a spiritual problem for them to solve. These souls, who have advanced quite a way in evolution, are returning to a basic feature of life to study it from a higher level; for they bring an intelligent brain and eager soul to manual labor instead of the heavy hand and dull intellect of the servant class.



It is my belief that they are sent back to this point in order to refresh themselves in lessons that only work can teach. And what does working with matter mean for man, from the viewpoint of the Spirit? It is to bring him into active co-operation with universal law. Nature's ends are order, economy, utility, beauty, proportion; and, just in the measure that a disciple manifests these, can she use him profitably. Let us examine the different stages of evolution in mankind. In a low state of development the individual is called upon to use matter in its grossest forms, applying his own physical energy as the motive power, and his usefulness is measured largely by his physical endurance, for he cannot be trusted to any considerable degree with personal responsibility; he is clumsy and destructive, even when well meaning; and though he may know how to do his humble part, he does it careless of results. His maximum intelligence can compass only the roughest forms of manual labor; he is the hewer of wood, the drawer of water, the miner, the cleaner of the street. He needs instruction even in these humble tasks, and supervision; the work of his hands is not of a nature to yield either joy or inspiration; it is enough, if, from it, he develops a spirit of fidelity to duty, integrity, obedience to superiors, and honesty.

As man rises in the scale, he is given greater

freedom; he is required to use less and less matter, and more delicately; its manipulation demands skill and discrimination; and a little later, he is called upon to apply the forces of nature; he harnesses water and steam and electricity to assist him as a skilled mechanic. Further on, he handles subtler forms, and infuses his labor with heart and brain. The artist uses much less pigment than the house painter; the lapidary requires finer tools and less material than the stone mason; and still man goes on, gaining independence with every step, until he drops matter wholly and uses only his mental power constructively; a few drops of ink, the words of his mouth are his entire equipment; with the high potentiality of his thought, he sways the destiny of nations, translates the mysteries of sound and color, is able to pierce the realm of the unknown, and wrest from it the secrets of the universe. These are our men of genius, the great statesmen, artists, musicians, poets, writers, orators, and inventors. Through all this long course, not only the race, but each individual is being trained to an exercise of creative faculty, and as he grows in responsibility, he is trusted to use through his higher faculties, powers, which carry with them a vaster utility, also the possibility of greater destructiveness. The degree of his creative energy alone determines where a man stands on the round

of evolution. He may be unconscious of his goal, but this is Nature's ultimate purpose with humanity. The greater the opportunity to manifest power, the heavier the obligation to conform to cosmic law. Men who use electricity must gauge it with greater accuracy than he who drives a mule; a miscalculation of a tenth of a second may ruin a sensitive plate of the highest importance in photography. The actinic rays of light represent an almost inconceivable potency; we only know how to apply them to photography as yet; but some day a genius may arise who will unlock the secret of a wider practical application.

He who would excel in other than common things, who desires to progress until he can use constructively thought power, which transcends physical forces, must obey the requirements of Nature in observing order, economy, utility, beauty, and proportion. With the greatest latitude of expression he must conform to these cosmic principles, and the higher he goes, the more individual the expression becomes, and the more necessary to be regulated. It takes long apprenticeship to proceed from gross matter to an intelligent use of physical forces; but how much longer and more severe the discipline will be for him who is to operate spiritual forces, and, in order to make sure of our proficiency, as we enter upon this advance-




ment, Nature sees to it that we shall bring our best knowledge to bear upon everything we do; that we shall approximate, to a degree, perfection in execution, that we shall slight nothing because it seems insignificant; for men cannot be a judge of ultimate issues; therefore she draws us around into the material plane once more, there to study its aspects anew, and to perceive her larger intention. She tests us to see if we are faithful in the little things before passing us on to greater. If an engineer makes a miscalculation in running his engine with steam or electricity, it may be fatal to many lives; if a soul, intrusted with spiritual powers, makes a mistake, it may be a thousandfold more disastrous. Therefore, when Nature undertakes to instruct a student in the mysteries, she sends him apparently down into the kindergarten class of labor, and when the first chagrin is over, he discovers, that, after all, he is not called upon to use figures in sums of addition and subtraction, but in algebraic equations. Nature is directing his attention to elemental matter to teach him the analogies between the lower and the higher; she reveals unsuspected correspondences; sets him humble tasks which are to try him, picks him up out of the dust when he goes under from despair—then trusts him a little more, leads him a trifle further, until he sees himself no

longer prostrate under a supposed burden, but acquiring a spiritual education. Even then the burden is not at once removed; not until he rises above it, and is superior to its limitations; not until he is ready to meet any duty without protest is he fit to enjoy further privileges.

My own life furnishes an illustration of this promotion into the kindergarten class, and my experience may help others to see inspiration in the daily tasks, that, heretofore, have quite overwhelmed them.

As a young housekeeper, I spent the first two winters by the New England coast, on an island, where, in mid-winter, it was impossible to secure a maid, and the care of the home fell upon me. I had borne no responsibilities before my marriage, and though I had been a member of a household that was most carefully directed, my knowledge of housekeeping was theoretical, and I must confess that, with the best intentions, my first efforts in that gentle art were sad failures. I did not use forethought or system; I hated dishwashing to the point of tears, and though I struggled to maintain a semblance of order, the disguise was so thin, and so much of my time was given to designing, which was very profitable, that I laid up for myself many days of judgment when the whole house wore a revolutionary appearance, and there was literally



not a dusted and quiet retreat where the indulgent husband could flee. I saw nothing in the unaccustomed duties except grim endurance and silent revolt, extending into the future indefinitely; for this was to be my home, where the domestic question was peculiarly difficult. I was in hot rebellion against conditions, yet tried hard to hide my disturbed mind from him, who overlooked mistakes and failures with an amiable patience. I fancy I should have done better under a severer master.

One day during the second winter, I happened to be washing the dishes alone after a terrific season of reorganization that had included everything from the front entry to the kitchen door, and in my deepest heart I cried out in bitterness: "How long, how long must I meet this cruel drudgery, and do this sort of work?" Swiftly came a voice audible to the inner ear alone: "Until you have conquered self."

This was the first time that I had heard the Voice actually speak to me, and if I had still been orthodox, I might have piously boasted afterward that Jesus had given me a bit of private personal advice. As it was, I thought nothing of the kind, but stood transfixed in the middle of the floor, tea towel in hand, reflecting upon the strange occurrence. So it all depended upon me, and not upon the supposed shortage of servants! Well, if that


were true, I should make short work of my time of servitude. The next day I went at my duties with a will, sweeping and dusting with a light heart, and a new régime was instituted. I established a bureau of amusing anecdotes while we washed the dishes together; we sang songs, recited snatches of poetry, and each day we timed ourselves to see if we could not break former records. From that day dishwashing lost its sting and became a matter of perfect indifference: I even wondered why I had disliked it so. While drying the dishes I used to let my eyes rove across the beach and harbor to the sky beyond, opening myself to the truths that began to hover about my duties, and this hour of the day became a rich opportunity for reflection.

That single sentence altered the whole aspect of life. I knew now that I was on trial, and had failed; but each day of self-conquest made the work easier, and its purpose grew more intelligible. I saw that it was not enough to recognize order as a natural law; one must become an exponent of it in daily life. I became interested to study how Nature achieved it, and noted that she does not bustle about and clean up to the discomfort of everybody; that she takes care of every atom as fast as it is outworn, transforming it by silent processes into fresh utilities. She rings no bell over her daily miracles; no gong announces the rising

and setting sun, there is no litter nor cuttings when she clothes her fields; there are no basting threads nor disorder when she weaves mantles of snow, or gauzy tissues of mist and haze. She uses ceaseless activity, tireless oversight; yet never wearies. Then I was led to see that she never works along old and hackneyed lines; she outruns our liveliest imagination; she never repeats herself nor becomes trite. When a lily dies, she may replace it with a fern, perhaps a tree. She fashions no two things alike in all the universe, yet everything is done with order, neatness, and despatch. How she rebuked my tardy habits by her punctual hours, my lack of method with her rotation of sun and moon, her appointed days for blooming flowers, her rising and falling tides. Once open to her instruction, no day was without its lesson. I began to study how I could apply her suggestions of precision and perfection; and, holding them in view, no act became insignificant. We all know the fatal results of too little or too much; vainly do we try to cover our disappointment over the unsavory dish that has suffered from the hand of the inconsequent cook, the careless performance of duty, the needless destruction of property. These are the outward sins of the heedless—but what of the moral and spiritual state of the offender? If one cannot be trusted to bake without scorching, season without restraint,

sweep, clean, and dust without betraying neglect, to cut and fit without botching, cast up figures without error, make a design, or write a MS. without complete revision, how can one expect to be trusted with higher responsibilities? No longer were my duties wearing and monotonous; I was on probation, and every faithful execution would bring me nearer liberation. My aim became perfection in the smallest things—to pour without spilling, to stir without smearing a vessel, to make every stroke of the broom count full value, to save needless steps, to expend no unnecessary power. Every loaf of bread or cake was a gift upon the altar. Not for one moment do I claim to have mastered these entirely—when I have, I shall no longer cast a shadow upon the earth, but shall have passed into another grade.

Everywhere I saw opportunities to practise conservation of force. If we bungle and dissipate our energy in the simplest tasks, how can we expect to manipulate successfully subtle forms of matter, to apply spiritual forces? One of the supreme meanings of life lies in the education of our hands to do our tasks exactly; and one is not an egotist, who begins to watch and correct his movements, who surprises himself at his work, in order to see if it cannot be done better, any more than a university student is an egotist, who devotes himself to train-



ing his mind, and submits to examinations from time to time.

Nor is one to indulge in self-pity while he is in the midst of the fray; often our courage fails; but a martyr spirit will blur the vision and defeat the whole purpose. One should never picture himself as crushed under the burden that sometimes piles up beyond endurance; but rather should he see himself as a strong swimmer in a high sea, breasting every wave with a master will.

I had a curious experience along this line. A very exhausting day of work had left me quite depleted by night, and when I retired a temptation arose to give way to tears to relieve the nervous tension; and while I was debating whether to yield to that pleasant weakness and enjoy a demoralizing season of self-pity, my better self came to the rescue. "Shame on you," it said sternly, "you, who reach out to the very stars in your aspirations at times, who believe that in some distant day the human soul will employ vast spiritual resources in its creative work; and you can't perform a few simple duties without cringing under the burden! You have no idea how petty and trifling your best efforts are; the task that has exhausted you to-day is so insignificant that you will have to repeat it to-morrow. With all your vaunting you never do anything that is truly creative, which, alone, is the

real work of the universe. If you gave your whole life to it, at your present stage of evolution, you couldn't make a single grass blade, nor mold one leaf. And a tree—it is hopelessly beyond you; yet these miracles are very simple examples of true work." Then in my imagination I swept over our hundred acres, where every inch of meadow and forest was crowded with divine handiwork; I passed down the road by sleeping cottages where people were living simple, monotonous lives, yet I knew that I was unequal to direct the destiny of a single one for five minutes; and yet on I sped to the village—still more complex in human problems, and removed from human supervision; on and on, and up and up, all the while seeing for the first time what the Spirit of God takes charge of every day. I seemed to get a bird's-eye view of cities and then of our continent, and then of other lands, with their teeming population; and of all those myriad lives, guided and directed by the Master-hand. The larger my perception of Deity grew, the more I shriveled, until I was less than a mere point. Never have I grasped such a stupendous conception of God as I did that night—the inconceivable distance between man's puny effort and the great creative sustaining power of the universe; and, so lost was I in a contemplation of the glory and majesty of the Supreme One, that I was content to be less than



nothing. Instead of being discouraged because of self-effacement, it gave a sense of warm comfort to realize that I was numbered among His helpless little ones, surrounded by the presence of an all-knowing, all-powerful Creator, who deigns to lead us out of our narrow selves, and makes us co-workers with Him, even though our services are so unworthy. Abased, I felt exalted, and the profound worship inspired by that vision put fresh courage into me.

Another thing I studied in Nature was economy. I do not mean the niggardly, hoarding spirit that we so often associate with that word—Nature never shows that. She scatters with a prodigal hand, seemingly careless of results, yet it is always to some purpose. No matter how much apparently goes to waste, there is not an atom lost: it is in reality a series of swift transformations. The universe is none the poorer when innumerable seeds are flung out that do not germinate, when forests burn and floods devastate. With careful frugality she gathers up the liberated gases, the spent waters, the decaying vegetation, and uses them over and over again. So prudently does she dispense her resources that no one can calculate the age of the morning dew, nor the countries that a rainbow has spanned, nor the shores that have been washed by the spray of a wave. They are coeval with rock-

ribbed hills, there is never youth nor age in her computations; she knows not locality, she works with equal ease under all climates. She does not recognize dimensions: under her fingers nothing is large, nothing insignificant. From fragments of mist she can float a skyful of irreproachable clouds, and expand the smoke of a single burning forest into miles of haze; yet when she fashions the spring garments of the earth, not a dry grass blade nor withered leaf escapes her vigilant eye; every one is indispensable for her purposes. She exercises the closest economy when she treats with the individual: she does not confer the energy of an elephant upon an ant, nor the philosophic mind upon a cat; she does not rush the power of a Niagara through a meadow brook, nor drive the sap of an oak through a rose stalk. Everywhere forces, elements, combinations, and capacities are graded, calculated to a nicety—a perfect adaptation to need and utility. She does not bestow great gifts upon a human being and then retire him to obscurity: she presents opportunity in exact proportion to endowment. No matter what the human estimate is, her plans never miscarry.

Another law of the universe, utility, I learned in home duties—to make things serve an exact purpose; not to put up with makeshifts; not to prolong what was outworn yesterday. What served

in the past is often a waste of power later. It takes the wisest discrimination to choose, select, and adapt in daily life; what is a pressing obligation to-day may be a past issue to-morrow. For example, there was a time when the modeling of elaborate gowns for myself and decorative work of many kinds were an education, and gave facility in the use of my hands and inventive faculties; now they have no place in my life; there are broader uses for my energies than they afford.

In learning discrimination, we discover poise—that perfect balance of our faculties that enables us to turn readily from one duty to another, giving full attention to each, yet clinging to none. At first sight, it seems as if we are needlessly distracted, and are scattering our forces, so insistent and conflicting are the claims that arise; we question if we are not incapable of holding fast to any given purpose. But such is far from the real state of things; we are to learn exactly which of many duties is of foremost importance at that moment, not which is most agreeable; to hold many reins lightly in our fingers, and feel the delicate intimating pull, first in this direction and then in that, and not drive a single steed all day long. Life seems to me as it does to a passenger looking from the window of a car, going at high speed. The heavens above, the far-distant stars alone remain calm

and stationary; they are the only permanent features in the landscape. The middle spaces with their quiet procession of mountain, hill, and lake, whose movements are slow and stately, are like the aims and purposes of life, steadfast in the main, yet they alter and change as time advances; while the immediate foreground with its fast-fleeing telegraph poles, fences, ravines, fields, and forests, races by and confuses us. Everything is restless and on wings, and it takes real effort to hold the eye on any one object for a single moment. We are bewildered and dazed by the rapid movement as we are by the swift succession of conflicting duties and obligations that rise daily, and escape us as we pursue them. If we follow them too closely at short range they exhaust us. It is only by lifting our tired eyes to the distant hills, the immovable heavens, that we rest our weary spirits; only then can we pass through the whirlwind without losing ourselves; and when we have mastered self sufficiently, we are as Guido's Aurora, guiding the horses of the dawn.

Yet still deeper must we go before we attain peace; for some think in the midst of the turmoil, "I well know where strength is to be found if I could but get brief seasons of rest and reflection, from which I could gain the needful self-control." We, who are to live by the Spirit, must learn that

we not only can, but must hold sweet communion while on the run; until we are able to open ourselves to spiritual influences under any and all conditions, we cannot make this side of our nature of practical use in everyday life. If we obtain truths only when in silence and passivity, we cannot draw from the source of wisdom when in the midst of life and human needs, where we shall be surely sent when we have found the inward light. For the light is not given for our private use alone. Unless the ecstasy of the saint leads to a greater service of man, it becomes a form of spiritual dissipation, a species of intoxication that unfits one for real duty. For this reason, when we begin to get truths we are precipitated into a genuine warfare; we must fight for the early moments of calm and quiet; we must prove that they are indispensable to happiness, and when we learn to value the inward life beyond any outward welfare, we shall be surprised to find that our ability to receive depends wholly upon the attitude of mind, and not upon conditions; that fresh revelations are more apt to come when we are busied about the daily task, when going on an errand, than when we deliberately sit under a green tree, and say, "Now I shall think great thoughts."

The pious reception of higher thoughts in a crowded car, in the street, in the busy kitchen or

workshop is a true conquest, and once gained is never lost, though it may vary in degree. The inner mind, which has no part in material things, is growing strong enough to transmit its private message to the outer mind at any time that the latter holds itself quiet enough to get the impression. Need I say that it takes years—long and often painful years, for some of us to rise above the clouds, and drive the horses of the dawn?

Another law of nature is beauty. Emerson says: "I marvel not so much at the beauty of the universe, as at the necessity of beauty." How many people feel themselves responsible for representing their ideal of beauty in all that they do? They may gratify themselves with beautiful houses, gowns, jewels, equipages that others have produced. This is but a negative choice; for none of them represents any actual expression of themselves. The question is, do they feel it a privilege, as well as an obligation, to put forth personal effort to make everything they touch a beautiful manifestation of themselves? No act is so simple, no task so menial that it cannot convey the idea of beauty. Many people buy costly flowers, and then stick them carelessly into any vase without a thought of graceful arrangement; others will provide a bountiful table, yet not present food in a tasteful form; others will build an expensive house, and place it

in bare grounds. Few consider that florid patterns, ill-assorted furniture, strong colors, unsuitable combinations of otherwise good things are significant evidences of inharmony within. Nowhere does the restless spirit of the times betray itself more openly than in the gaudy wares that are so promptly transferred from the department store to the home of the average American citizen. And what can be said in defense of the blatant music of the amusement hall, that is permitted to disturb the peace of the home circle through the offensive phonograph? Nothing could be more remote from the idea of harmony and melody than its bold choice of discordant noises and equally vulgar songs. I must not dwell upon this type of decadence lest I descend to invective against the wanton perversion of the taste of the young, which is the inevitable and disastrous consequence of this modern evil. When a soul becomes infused with beauty, it surrounds itself only with what is true and lovely; it eliminates all that is indelicate and vulgar in thought or speech, and escapes from, if it cannot transform, inharmonies of color, form, or sound.

You, who are groaning under intolerable petty tasks—how are you doing them? Do you realize that you are being trained in responsibility to meet your share of the world's work? Are you using

the best of your intelligence, the wisdom and strength of your spirit, or only a pair of incapable blundering hands that are quite satisfied so long as a thing is even half done? If this latter is your attitude, you will be permitted to serve another day. Do you feel degraded by the work you are called to do? You are really degraded by the way you perform it. The moment you put your best into work it is no longer drudgery; when you are worthy, a nobler occupation will surely come; for nature has great need of superior workmen, and has a place waiting for you when you improve the quality of your aim.

Many a woman mourns that the artistic world is the loser, because she has burned her budding talents on the altar of the kitchen range, instead of breathing the sweet incense of a dimly lighted studio. Can I hope to make her see that a housewife may use the nicest artistic sense when she divides her dough into rolls of exact size; when she rolls her pastry into a perfect circle; when she cuts a loaf with neat precision, and divides a pie or cake into definite portions; when she makes a skilful measurement with cup or spoon? Are not these educative in the best sense for the tyro, and therefore as worthy as the monotonous squinting of one eye, with a thumb-measured pencil held at arm's length before impracticable plaster casts?




The purpose of art is not so much to leave what is at best an imperfect record of a fleeting vision of beauty behind for the world to admire, as it is the appointed means through which the artist is qualified for a higher expression in the dim future that awaits him. The same is true of musical attainments so often neglected after marriage. If a housewife can no longer follow her music, let her express such harmony in her daily life that her adjustment to new duties shall awaken a perfect melody: let her *live* her music, when she cannot play it. Life has more ways than one of teaching the same lesson; and, if we will but believe it, each one is under the tutelage best fitted to graduate him with honors, when the hour arrives.

If you find yourself wearied and despondent from your work, you are either putting more energy into it than is needful, or you have confused another person's obligation with your own, or you do not infuse it with interest; in short, you are not getting out of it what is there for you; for the purpose of work is education, and any form of it can illumine us when we see its mission. Work seldom exhausts us; it is our rebellion against it that wears us out. I will not say how many years it took to teach me the truth of that last sentence. Rebellion is very often due to pride; we think ourselves superior to what we are called upon to do, and be-

lieve that our protest against it is a proof of superiority. This is a state of mind that the Spirit deals with very gently, but firmly; and it is only when we recognize that no work is high and none is low, when our hands find all alike worthy, that we are released from some of the most irksome duties.

Does it ever occur to you, who perhaps chafe under the direction of superiors, that you need that direction just as little children do who are looked after by their elders? So long as you are incapable of self-control, of prudent foresight, of sound judgment, of economy and wise use of the things now intrusted to you, just so long will you be subordinated, and very justly, to those who have a larger command and view of life. It is you yourself who holds you to inferior positions. If you bungle where you are, what would you do if the results of your ignorance and mismanagement were further reaching? We are never kept longer than is necessary on one point; until we have reached a humility that does not scorn any task, that accepts failure or success quietly, that is willing to serve or to remain idle if need be, that demands no personal recognition, we are really not fit for much; because there are pauses in all progress; there is much small work to be done in life at every turn—small things big with meaning, out of which, in due time, grow great issues; and if proud little men



were allowed to dictate what they would do, we should, in all probability, see our American republic with thirty million Presidents and no one to run our trains, to make our streets, or work in field or factory; we should have the whole order of human life inverted. It is rather soothing to remember that the Creator did considerable lowly work when He made lichens, and mollusks, and starfish. When we observe the perfection of corals and minerals, we do not feel that there was any descent from His dignity in creating them.

Many and hard were my lessons on this point, for I had a proud heart and an untamed will, and it was after several years of instruction, when I was still insubordinate, that this striking incident occurred. There were three things in my younger days, that I said I would never do—harness a horse, do laundry work, or wash a floor. There came a day when my beloved was overtaken with a heart difficulty and it was a great peril for him to raise his arms, and I was not only eager, but thankful, to learn to harness our horse; and I aided with this duty for two years. Also the time came when my maids were such indifferent laundresses—they too must have registered a vow not to master this art—that I was glad to take a hand at the washboard, and attend to certain little niceties myself, and I was pleased to show them exactly how table

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linen should be ironed, and no one was prouder than I to prove that I could really wash a garment clean, and not leave it patterned when done. But the floor still remained. Dynasties had come and gone, and in nine years of housekeeping I had not broken this vow. I would sweep industriously, wipe up carefully any little spots, but a generous, wholesale application of water to the kitchen floor could not be charged against me. Sometimes things got too bad, when we chanced to be maidless for a season, but it was not the housewife who would ply the mop while I made myself very busy elsewhere, and pretended not to know it. I was in danger of passing out of life with this sin of omission writ large upon my page.

One summer things reached a state in the kitchen floor that even I could no longer conscientiously blink, and I debated with myself for two days about it; and, with a feeling much as if I were approaching the stake, I got out the mop and bucket—and never was floor more scrupulously cleaned. When I was going over it the third time, right in the midst of my labor, the Voice, which I had heard at long intervals since its first memorable utterance, and had learned to recognize, said: "This was but a test," and the words were accompanied by the beautiful pale violet light that had so many times attended my highest thoughts of aspiration

—but which had been dimmed for many months. How blind I had been, and how much I had missed! for it was at least seven years since the Voice had first spoken, and told me that not until I had conquered self could I hope for release. I was so astonished, so overjoyed to have the renewed assurance that my daily tasks were in some way vitally related with my spiritual growth, that I wanted to mop that floor a fourth time to prove that I no longer had any pride about it; that, seeing my error, and eager to make amends, it was fit that I should make the hated task an act of immediate consecration. I contented myself with doing it four times a week after that, each time with the glad thought of showing that I now understood, and could stand the test. That was the last ditch for my pride; and from that day to this, I no longer rebelled against any house duties, for evidently they were sent as a means of grace, and I saw that the path to illumination lay through them.

Returning to those earlier years—how fruitful they were; and, as in nature's other operations, the season was often long between the first flowering of a conception and the ripe fruit of its complete assimilation. I used to wonder why it is, after we grasp intellectually a new interpretation, that we are held to its practice for weary weeks and

months. Our impatience is much as if an eager youth under athletic training would say each day to his instructor, "I understand the exercise you have just explained, and recognize its value, but do not want to waste any time in practising it; give me another." We do not grow that way either in our physical bodies or in spirit: we must store up and build into our being the essence of work. Let me see if I can make my meaning clear: we know, when we eat, that a large portion of our food will pass on as waste matter, another portion will build up the tissues, a little will be transmuted into energy that will keep us warm, will help us to walk, to talk, to act, also to write, to think, to sing, or to pray. Although these are transitory forms of energy, there is beyond them, though the entire body changes its tissues within a few years, a mysterious something that permanently resides, an essential part of our being that is helped to maintain itself throughout life, and persists as a continuous personality through the use of daily food. Work presents a close analogy to this. Man is prompted either from necessity or inclination to express himself through bodily or mental activity; it is a physical need; but the actual resultant of man's efforts is of a fugitive character. In the common form of ministering to temporary utility and comfort, it corresponds to the waste



matter of the body; for the most part man's work scarcely outlasts the individual; he is often superseded before his aim is accomplished. Even masonry, the most substantial of all man's constructions, crumbles with the century. In the general scheme of nature, individual work has small value to the world at large; but there is something more important than this outward manifestation. The world may not need any man's work, but the man needs it. The privilege of work is everything in a man's intellectual and spiritual development; he expands under its difficulties and problems; his faculties grow alert, his perceptions become sensitive. But better than this, work builds into a man a permanent moral residuum of honesty, fidelity, patience; it hardens his spiritual muscles to resist temptation. Rejoicing in his hands, he penetrates to the joy and secret of creation. So long as we feel the need of praise or appreciation to sustain us, we have not reached the highest privilege of work. The joy of the doing is not yet revealed to us. Labor is the nexus between spiritual knowledge and dead matter, and is needful in some form to a soul's progress. Labor discloses vital correspondences, and reveals many hidden mysteries.

A heavy snowstorm that impedes traffic is a good illustration of my point. We often see an

electric car stalled on the track, with wheels whirling round, but unable to move forward. The power overhead is strong, and the mechanism of the car is adapted to use it; yet, so long as direct contact with the rails is prevented, there is no reaction, no progress. In the same way spiritual vision and power are ever present and adequate, and the human mind is adapted to receive it; but, in the design of nature, the unseen can be interpreted only through the seen. When we approach matter alone, we are like a stalled car—grounded; we see only the burden, and lose our way. Work of itself can never carry us upward; but when we bring our spiritual mind to bear upon our lower duties we get the reaction of a force upon matter, which is the prime requisite of progress. Then Spirit illumines labor while labor interprets Spirit, and thus are clearly revealed the fundamental truths that govern the natural and superphysical world alike. So long as we are among the unawakened, we may be as blind as we please; but once upon the upward Path, everything conspires to lead us on; or, if we falter, to push us forward.

The necessity of viewing common daily tasks in the light of the Spirit was brought home to me in my first years of training, during one of those intervals when I was brought back again to the



place of humiliation. My family was temporarily increased for a few weeks, I had no maid, my husband was considered desperately ill, I was revising the MS. of *Mountain Playmates* that had to be in the hands of the publisher at once; I was carrying on the details of an industrial work that I shall shortly describe, and to say that my hands and heart were full scarcely states the situation. I arose at five, and when I lay down each night I could not recall a single moment of the day when I had gratified or ministered to self. Weariness and depression often sat like guardian angels by my bedside.

One night, after a particularly strenuous day, I retired very late, utterly fagged, when I remembered that the peas for the next day's soup had not been put to soak, and I thought rather bitterly: "Is it possible that I cannot even get needful rest without a small duty dragging me forth?" But I lit the candle, and went to the kitchen where a wild gale was blowing through the opposite windows, and several times my light was almost blown out. It was difficult with one hand to get off the lid of the can holding the peas, and yet I dared not set the candle down on the table. Then came the Voice once more: "Hold your light higher"—which I did, placing it on a shelf, and there was not a flicker. Then I went back to bed, not to sleep, but to reflect upon the message—for

I knew that it had much deeper import than the moment's need. I saw just where the trouble was: I was meeting the matter of pea soup, the day's work—as if they were ultimates, when they were merely means to an end—symbols for my interpretation. Only by the light of the Spirit could I ever perceive that duties were veritable stepping stones leading upward; but, to interpret them, I must not allow my soul to be dragged to their level, but hold its light where it could illumine the way. That simple message gave courage for the next day, and for many days. In the strength of a few words we can go through long stretches of wilderness.

Do you think I degrade the spiritual life when I descend to housewife drudgeries for its application? When you consider that this is the daily portion of a vast number of human beings their life through, and that here or nowhere can the soul's growth be made possible for them, then we see that practical religion must meet us where we stand on Monday—not on Sunday: it does not depend upon the pulpit orator. When our eyes are once opened, and when the inner ear has learned to hear, there is no condition, nor act which may not bring us into vital relation with the Highest. We degrade the daily life when we think it unworthy to reflect the heavens, which are not afar off—but where you and I stand this moment. Over


and over again must the Spirit speak, pointing to this and to that, before we can understand that we are ever upon holy ground, and that all things are sacred to the temple. To make my meaning clear, I must leave my narrative for a moment, and refer to events that transpired a number of years later.

One was an interesting lesson gathered from the kitchen pump, which had never worked very well; but I did not know what a trial to the patience it was until a favorite maid left me to be married, after being with me for several years, and I took up conditions as she had endured them. Toward the end of her stay the pump had become so unruly, that it took several minutes of hard work to start the water to run, and when brought up, it ran down almost immediately. We tinkered and put in new washers, but it gave so much trouble that the maid used to fill a number of vessels for the day's supply, and then let the water go. We had bought a new pump to replace the old one, after her departure, and were waiting for a man to attach it—an indefinite period in the country—when it occurred to me to observe conditions, to see if one could get a lesson; for now sermons were in stones and running brooks, and perchance, pumps. As I worked about the kitchen I studied my problem. The well was deep and

'full of water, the connection was perfect, for we could draw it—then the trouble must lay with the pump. Was there any analogy so far? Yes; the well was the Spirit, the Source of all supply; the connection was prayer, through which we communicate with Spirit, and the pump was—myself—fairly useful in point of construction, but wheezy—and why? Again I applied myself to the pump for the answer. It would work as long as you worked, and then it balked. That was I, too; I had seasons of refreshment, times of drawing water from the living source, but it took real effort to place myself in direct communication with it, sometimes more than I could give—and then it flashed upon me that the trouble with the pump was that it was not used *enough*! If I kept on pumping, it would never run down. I could apply this also: my periods of aspiration were occasional; I had no constant communion, but allowed my mind to be absorbed and diverted by the common round. So far, so good; but the remedy. I was getting so near the truth that I knew if I could solve that pump, I could settle the question of my own spiritual drought. So I lingered near, drawing water up, without letting it run off at once, and each time reaching out to the Spirit in prayer, until the water stayed up ten minutes instead of five without my aid, then half an hour, then half the

morning—then all day; and when, at last, I got it to stay all night, it never ran out again; and although more than seven years have passed, we have never had to put the new pump in place, for the old one works perfectly. Now I did not work a miracle; and although I cannot explain the natural law by which that pump, after years of misbehavior, suddenly yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness, all that concerns me is, that it was, under analysis, a perfect symbol of the soul in its spiritual relations, and that the whole secret of a rich and joyous manifestation of Spirit in our life depends upon the degree of constant and intimate communion that we establish with it through our own souls. Whether we get little or much depends upon how often we turn to the Source. If we go seldom, or indifferently, worldly interests make it hard to reach out into the silence; and it takes so long to still our perturbed minds that we have scant time left in our busy day to wait for the unfoldment of the message when it begins to come.

A few months after this event I received a beautiful vision in a dream one night. For a whole year I had been ill with nervous prostration, brought on by exhausting work, financial loss, and fear of poverty in my old age—a sad state which I shall explain in its proper place in a future



chapter, and I had not yet recovered, which made conditions very hard, and outwardly my life was not a manifestation of peace; inwardly I was struggling against many warfares. In spite of past lessons—why are we so incredibly slow of heart, so little of faith?—I felt a fierce revolt against a suffocating pressure of duties both indoors and without, things that I had from time to time added voluntarily, but now had become an intolerable drag from their long continuance. The housework, my garden, now large enough to tax a well woman's whole time; my industry, with its tremendous obligations and correspondence, and long continued ill health from overwork—all contributed to a chaos within that nearly broke my heart to consider. Was it possible after so many years of aspiration, of unmistakable leading—for it was more than nine years that the Voice had repeatedly counseled me, and positive evidences of personal guidance had come—that I was still at the mercy of circumstances, still representing unrest, protest, almost defiance against fate? Where was that creative power of the mind that I had used to such purpose in earlier years? Of what use was former discipline if I could again and again lose my hold, and fall into the very pit of despondency? It was in this mood that I received a letter from a friend, who wrote: "You, who have proved so much in

the past, why do you not assert yourself? You have the power within you; why do you not create a favorable environment?" Her letter stung me to the quick, for I knew that it was all true; no one could help me at this moment but myself; so long as I was in my present state of mind, it was impossible for me to manifest anything but discord; yet I seemed utterly helpless, caught in a snarl of life that had tightened about me until it nearly choked me. I was really indifferent to the outward things—the work, the weariness, the physical misery, these were nothing—but as tokens of inward darkness and spiritual chaos, they made life simply unendurable. I fled to the woods to weep my heart out, crying from the depths of my soul for light that would help me to see the way: "I know what it is to hear; speak; grant just a word of counsel"; but no word came, no message flashed through the brain; still I waited, terrified by my own loneliness and despair. Heavy rain-drops began to fall, and I was driven back to the house; but I could not return to the living-room in such a tumult, and expose my storm to calm, questioning eyes; for even our nearest and dearest can never understand our anguish of soul. So I stood on a back piazza watching with swollen eyes the clouds pile up on each other in black masses. I thought; "That is my state of mind exactly; even

when I seek relief, everything piles up, and drives me back upon myself "; but as I looked, a little rift in the cloud appeared, followed by a shaft of sunlight, and behold! the clouds were no longer black, for where the light touched the darkness, it became a radiance. The sun did not disperse the storm clouds, but gilded them. I saw only the outward fact at that moment, but perceived not the parallel until the next day, when I observed it again with the mind's eye. Within a week the answer I had prayed for came through this beautiful vision.

I stood aside, and saw my own soul as an inner light, white, but small, and flickering under every wind that blew; and my whole thought was centered upon shielding it from being blown out. As I continued to look, the flame grew larger and more steady; it burned with a clear white glow; and then it grew and grew until it suffused the whole body with a wonderful light, and I noticed that, as it increased, it warded off disease, fear, sorrow, and disaster of every sort, and that no harm could come nigh; and still expanding, it inclosed the whole body and extended far beyond as a globe of indescribable glory of exquisite, changing color; and wherever it moved, was carried a protection from every evil to those who came within its influence. Oh, the beauty and



wonder of it! For days I was in a state of ecstasy, intoxicated with a wild kind of joy; and this was the magnificent future of the soul of humanity—my own little trembling soul that I was so fearful of losing, this was the ultimate radiant possibility! How my heart rejoiced, and how the burdens, which were not removed at once, became tipped with radiance under the illumination of this heavenly vision. Then I knew what was meant when we are admonished to go on from grace to glory—from the low levels of common morality and ordinary virtues on to this wondrous transfiguration of beauty and power that will be manifested in us all in due season.

## 'A SEASON OF GROWTH


“ EACH person has felt his own call to cast aside customs, timidities, and limitations, and to be in his place a free and helpful man,” says Emerson; and one of Nature’s favorite ways of preparing a man for his special work is to take him apart, to surround him with silences and stars while she instructs him.

From the New England coast in winter, I was taken to the mountains in summer, where, after two years, I made my permanent home. There is something very strange about the mind of man, which we think of as a mirror of consciousness from moment to moment, observing natural objects, and reflecting them in a succession of fugitive impressions; for there is a hidden side, other than reason and memory, having a larger operation that goes on continually, and quite unperceived even by self-analysis, which stores up seemingly forgotten events, rearranges our views, adjusts our eyes to longer perspectives, and at some unexpected hour shows us to ourselves as new beings. And nowhere is the reorganizing process made more swiftly than in a quiet retreat, away

from men and obligations. In the midst of sunshine, flowers, and beautiful fruits, surrounded by steadfast mountains to protect the opening bud of the soul from worldly encroachments, I found myself; not in a day, nor in a year; yet this was the place of regeneration. It was here that I recovered the missing column of my arch, so long lost—the belief in the free agency of man, that, with its twin column—the sovereignty of God, supported my early faith. What theological doctrine had failed to prove satisfactorily, Mulford had restored to me—that man is free, that he does choose what he shall do and be, and that God not only grants him entire freedom to carry out his choice, but, at times, forces him to assert the divine authority that is invested in each one of us. Unconsciously, too, I was uniting the midnight revelation of my selfish disregard of small services to others with the final conclusion of Tolstoy, that the meaning of life lay in a ceaseless doing of good; and, before I knew it, I was called upon to make a final choice between a life of careless self-indulgence and one of service to others. Not that I knew just the hour when the choice was made, nor how decisive that choice was to be, nor how complete and irrevocable was the self-renunciation involved. The bandage was not lifted from my eyes until I was well on the Path, else my heart would have faltered, ere I had

begun, and I should have cried out: "Who is equal to this duty? certainly, not I."

I am now going back to the first three years of my marriage, taking up the thread of my narrative where I left it at the beginning of the last chapter, to the time when I devoted myself to making a home, using my creative skill both in the cottage and about the grounds; and it is wonderful how we can transform the atmosphere of a place without greatly altering the actual form. Take, for example, the average living-room, strewn with the usual waste product of sentiment and thoughtless acquisition, arranged with small thought as to suitability or harmony, and such a room is lacking in dignity or repose. If a person, sensitive to environment and harmony of color, takes such a room in hand, gathers up the needless clutter of photographs, bric-a-brac, and trinkets, relates articles so as to repeat a particular note of color or form, removes superfluous furniture, and arranges necessary things so as to express repose, comfort, and convenience, eliminates everything that does not convey actual beauty or utility, what a transformation is wrought. Much as I should like to preach æsthetics to heedless Americans who have an unrestrained lust of possessing things, my chapter must deal with more important matters; for, after all, no one can give a recipe for good taste; a per-




son's environment is but a reflection of the individual; and his choice of what shall be a background for himself is very significant. The restraining influence of a professional decorator of refined taste is only temporary; a vulgar, ostentatious mind will speedily reduce a recently purchased, quiet elegance to the level of its habitual atrocities. Within a month the owner will assert herself; so we must go much deeper than the well-meant, but superficial, advice given in the Woman's Page of current literature if we are to secure a national expression of beauty: the mind that has not yet passed out of a state of barbarism must be recreated.

Our cottage was an opportunity for study in chromatics; from a variety of sources, we had gathered a regular hodge-podge of household articles, many of which had outlived their usefulness; and it was no mean art to bring harmony out of chaos. I regard an intelligent selection and arrangement of the necessities of daily life a valuable means of education. It is not the purchase of the first thing that catches the fancy; the essential thing is to maintain a close relation between known belongings and the still unpossessed additions. This helps to cultivate the imagination, trains the color sense, exercises the creative faculties to see adaptations and possibilities in unusual materials. Looked at

aright, it contributes to the development of what is highest in our nature.

I can see the value of discrimination in my own life; first learning color harmonies through selecting flosses and crewels for embroidery; also in choosing materials for gowns and hats, so that they should supplement each other; then assisting in the furnishing of three houses, where I was given free rein; later, through design, in perceiving the beauty and interpretation of line, and by the time I had mastered five different branches of design and had furnished hundreds of practical working patterns to manufacturers, I began to know something of the rudiments of suitability and adaptation—two beautiful features in which nature abounds. I had already played with pigments in many forms—water colors, oils, fresco colors, mineral paints for china, tints and stains for stencilling, until I could reproduce any color, and was so sensitive to delicate gradations of tone that I could match them from memory. A feeling for color and a knowledge of form and a desire for real service were the three small tributaries that were about to make a confluence that would become a veritable river of future activity. In the silence of the mountains all past efforts were to be gathered up and focused upon a definite end.



I made it a habit each day to take a single thought as a subject of meditation during spare moments, and dwell upon it for a week, perhaps more, until I grasped it; and then proceed to another. I must have felt the coming event, for I was absorbed in a contemplation of the subject of growth—its character, its actual processes. I observed Nature about me, but reflected nothing of her calm, resistless power; I was feverish, anxious lest I was not advancing, plucking at my own roots to see if they held fast to the soil.

It was in this mood that I came across the saddest thing I have ever witnessed in the natural world. In the cellar, one day, I found a sucker from a rose bush, that grew in a bed in front of the cottage. In a desire to lead an independent life, it had struck out, and, meeting an obstacle in the stone foundations, with great difficulty had forced itself through a crevice, determined to assert its vital powers. When I discovered the rose, it had come to itself in the semi-darkness of the cellar, where, finding the mistake, it was reaching back toward the light of the upper world, which had been forsaken, and with long blanched stem was vainly trying to erect itself toward a small window. The effort was feverish; but the harder it tried to grow, the more the length and weight of the stem weighed it down, and each day it dropped

lower and lower. I knew if I touched the anæmic stem I could feel the hot desire of an instinct for light and freedom. For days I watched the struggle, helpless to aid; for nothing would avail but to cut off the false aspiration and drag it back to the old environment, where, maimed and thwarted, life could begin anew—but it would be life, not a living death in the darkness. At length the sight was so painful that I could not go near the place; for I had not the strong heart of the Almighty, who firmly cuts and prunes the perverse human vine that it may bring forth more fruit: I could not bear to cause suffering; so, in my human compassion—I let it die! I saw myself in that straggling rootlet, eager, impetuous, chafing under restraint and limitation, liable, in my self-assertion, to go astray under mistaken ideals; and I also saw my own need of the Light—the wholesome upper air of spiritual things. Every time I felt restless and sufficient, I thought of that pallid, starving shoot, and it made me pause. True growth is poised, never excited; it is punctual, but not hurried; it makes use of the immediate environment, and does not grope about for unnatural conditions.

For a long time I mourned over this incident as a false effort and earnest desire without result; and it hurt me to see that a true endeavor, even on the part of a rose, should be lost. It seemed




contrary to natural law; and for a time my faith in ultimate good was shaken. But small was my faith, and short my vision! Was the effort of the rose fruitless because its own life was lost; or did it serve a higher purpose than most roses are permitted to fulfil when it helped a soul to see a great truth, to grow more calm and steady because of its failure? and who knows how many others may be strengthened by the story of its brief tragedy? Many are the issues of this wonderful universe of ours, and slender are some of the threads that help to make up the design of the Great Weaver, and strange are the fulfilments of defeat! If, out of the tiny, broken arc of that abortive effort, shall arise a strong human soul as the supplement, to complete the circle, then is the death of that rose justified.

It was at this juncture that a seed was planted—a single sentence uttered, that was to transform me from an idler into a working member of society. As I look back, I see that my life has swung upon a series of single sentences that have had a revolutionary effect, much as if points upon the surface of a sphere became each in turn a center upon which it revolved for a season. It has never been more than a few words at a time, usually less than half a dozen, that have served to alter my views, and have started me on a new course of

thought and activity. I had gone with my husband to New York for a short visit with Edmund C. Stedman, and one day, at a studio reception, I encountered in Douglas Volk, the artist, an old acquaintance, and as is customary, we tried to bridge over in a few sentences of explanation, the years that had elapsed since we last met. I have often reflected on this interesting phase of human life: how the days and weeks and years, that have been filled to the utmost with pain or pleasure or activity, are epitomized in a few brief sentences when they are related to an acquaintance; how much is compassed in a few words; how little is comprehended, unless the other has passed through similar experiences; and then there is no need of speech. For example, I have had occasion to address letters to thousands of strangers, yet I never write the word, Mrs., that it does not serve as an Open Sesame to relate to me with the romance, the joy, perhaps the sorrow that is only possible to one bearing that title.

Well, in about five minutes, I had brought the years that had overflowed with novelty of experience, happiness, and observation up to date; they were swiftly reviewed, squeezed like a lemon, and reduced to a platitude. Then we were ready for real conversation. Without entering into details, it resulted in my saying that I was living in the



country the year through, and my questioner asked what I was doing there. I thought, though I did not tell him, that time was not long enough in New York to relate the interesting affairs of everyday country life; so I discreetly contented myself with saying that I was enjoying myself thoroughly.

"But," said he, "I do not mean quite that; what are you doing for the people about you?"

Be it remembered that this was fourteen years ago when there was not an epidemic feeling of responsibility on the part of the summer resident for the happiness and well-being of a rural community; it was in the Golden Age of private comfortable living, when the conscience was not worn on the sleeve, to be plucked at by amateur reformers, ambitious of good works; so the question of rural uplift, being entirely new, rather startled me. Without any uneasy knowledge that I was tapping a live wire which would promptly galvanize me into something more than a selfish automaton, I answered: "Nothing; I have no opportunities, as we are very limited in means, and our neighbors are living in comfort and apparent happiness."

I confess that I felt a little on the defensive, because, a few days before, I had been challenged by a friend, who intimated that we were selfish in our choice of life, and that our preferred retire-

ment was nothing less than a cowardly running away from the real issues and work of the world when we turned our back upon cities, and left them to jolt on as best they could without our encouraging presence; and I had then fumbled helplessly about for something that would excuse our happiness, and, with much satisfaction, had plucked from memory a Pauline saying: "The fruits of the Spirit are peace, love, joy," and so on through the thick-set bough of Christian virtues, which silenced her, as she was a woman who respected Biblical authority. I had blithely added that we were justified, in that we had not enough to live on in town; and so long as we were garnering some of the above-named fruits, it seemed wise to defer ordering a furniture van to take us to the station. Now here was another invader of my peace, willing to admit our right to live where we pleased, provided we did not take our pleasures too seriously, and would agree to cultivate an uncomfortable sense of responsibility for the neighborhood. But I was somewhat hasty in my conclusion: it was no glittering generality that was to prod my conscience—it was a definite and reasonable appeal to my vulnerable side.

"How can you feel," he continued, "that there is no chance to help in any community when you have a talent, long trained and developed, that you

are not using for public good? Why are you not doing it?"

Next to our conscience, there is nothing so disturbing as people who know our past. There are many things besides our sins that are charged up against us; we have to make good every budding promise of youthful talent; we must give an exact account for our opportunities; we are held relentlessly to any hope or aspiration, that we have inadvertently confided—and I was now challenged to meet an unpaid obligation to a community because I had betrayed a rash taste for study and work in my youth.

I fluttered like a snared bird; but his thrice uttered sentence, which he repeated oracularly, unmindful of the painful effect of its persistence—"Why are you not doing something?" held me fast; I was in the grip of a definite responsibility, though not yet aware of it. Then he told me that he desired to live just as we were doing, and wished to develop craft work in the country; and, recognizing that I was but a babe in such matters, explained various kinds of handwork suitable to rural communities, where living was cheap. I agreed with him that his plan was excellent—for him; even yet his appeal had but reached my ear; it took several months to filter down into my heart.

Among the crafts he enumerated, he mentioned

the hooked rug as containing many undeveloped possibilities, which attracted my attention, as I had often thought the same thing, having seen, in several New England villages, the honest, but scarcely beautiful, attempts by housewives, who endeavored to cover their floors with mats made from cast-off clothing.

I returned home in careless mood, not knowing that a seed was germinating in the darkness of my sub-conscious mind, and that it was to follow the law of all natural growth, slowly, encountering sunshine and storm, with periods of intense activity, alternating with times of repose and reflection. But so it was: and, merely as a domestic experiment, with a prudent eye to save from the moth that corrupts, I made a rug of sentiment for our front entry from a dark blue cheviot that had been my traveling gown when married, and a white nun's veiling that I had kept as a souvenir of my first effort at dressmaking. These were pleasant symbols of the new enterprise, which was to be an embodiment of sentiment and creation.

I shall not go into the details of how the seed idea grew and spread its leaves, for I have related it elsewhere, and must not repeat. It is sufficient to say that the first rug was so successful that I wanted my neighbors to have the design, and others also; and from my desire to share what was, to my mind,

attractive, came the determination to place my knowledge of design and color harmonies at the disposal of others. I did not know then, that beauty is not an abstract and final thing, making a universal appeal; that one object is not beautiful to every eye, any more than that another offends all tastes. When I offered my work as a suggestion to others, they did not approve of simple bold designs, derived from ancient civilizations which had loved to work in symbols, depending upon warm soft tones of tertiary colors to enhance the effect. They preferred primary colors, a frank and realistic simulation of a rose, an autumn leaf, a dog's head, or that of a deer. Who shall decide which of us was right? As I could not work along the line of native New England expression, if I were to be of any use, it could only be by inducing others to co-operate with me—and it was about as difficult to achieve as to make the tail wag the dog. Yet it was done; and not for my own neighborhood alone, but for many other communities who had been working along unprofitable lines; which is a convincing argument to my mind how needful it is to follow one's innate convictions in æsthetics as well as in morals, if we are to have any influence. Little did I imagine, when I desired to place my advice at the disposal of others, that I was binding myself to a wheel

that would revolve three hundred and sixty-five days out of the year, for indefinite years. Considerable as the equipment was that I brought to the new work, it took all past knowledge and experience, and much more. Not only hands and eyes and brain were involved, but also my spiritual faculties. At every turn I met the blank wall of obstacle; there was no precedent for any feature of the craft, for former rugs were rarely marketable, and I had to establish a practical standard for the price to be paid to the worker and to be set upon the finished product; material had to be made especially for my purpose, as a pure wool flannel twill of moderate cost had been driven from the market by knitted underwear and cotton substitutes. It was necessary to evolve designs that would in no way imitate those in the market; and when one considers that the nations of the world have been busy making rugs for several thousand years, it is apparent that it is no easy thing to produce anything original. It was a literal work of creation to the smallest detail, in a remote mountainous district, over a hundred miles from any source of supply, or market for the product. I knew not which way to turn for raw materials; yet here was where the law of demand worked the miracle. I have already spoken of it at such length that I cannot prolong the subject. It proved



a talisman that opened every door, created markets, secured supplies, brought me needful information. Often I felt as if I dwelt in a world of magic, and that the word, limitation, had been stricken from my vocabulary—and then a snag would suddenly trip me up, and I saw that there was need of constant personal activity as well as of all-prevailing desire.

As I review that side of my life it seems as if I were a single passenger upon a large vessel, running through a narrow and tortuous channel, set everywhere with buoys to mark the rocks and shoals; and continually the vessel pointed directly toward some rock where it seemed that it must founder, when an unseen power within the vessel would lightly steer it at the right moment, and all that I had to do was to trust absolutely, and be still; and to be still with me was not to be passive, but to remain at my post, and work from ten to sixteen hours a day in the light granted for that day.

On and on the influence has spread into various kinds of schools, institutions, and private enterprises; and when I stop to consider that this craft, which has gone into every State of our Union, has found its way into lonely homes on the prairies, and remote corners of our continent, and penetrated several foreign countries, was cradled and

fostered on a kitchen stove in a tiny cottage, without even a pump, during the first years, and all the water for dyeing had to be drawn, even in mid-winter, from a well outside, it is a striking example of what it is possible for the individual to achieve in the face of overwhelming obstacles, if he is but faithful to a trust.

I have always looked upon my Industry as a sacred charge committed to me. Generations of women had made similar rugs in New England, Canada, and Nova Scotia; yet it was my privilege to give the process a new form, to reduce it to an exact method, to bring it into vogue, and elevate it to a level where it now finds a worthy place beside foreign textiles. It is no wonder that I treat the work reverently, and make it an expression of my religion. In fact, my zeal knew no limit, and it was through over-devotion that I had to learn the bitter lesson that, no matter how good the cause, how brave our heart, and strong our spirit, yet we use a vehicle of flesh and blood that is not indestructible, and physical limitations must be recognized.

I used to work all day, dyeing, designing, arranging color schemes, advising with workers, who drove long distances to get their materials which they used at home, and then I spent my evenings answering letters despite of a red cobweb of pain

that nightly wove itself across my forehead. And what piles of letters from North, South, East, and West! I had a little glimpse of what the heart of God must feel with the cry of humanity ever ascending to His ears. What pitiful revelations those letters gave of private sorrows, loss, poverty, and anxiety from multitudes who turned to me for help of one kind or another, as they do to every one who succeeds in any quarter. But I was new to the business of sympathy, and they tore my heart; the writers were crying for loaves when they really wanted the Bread of Life; they fancied that they were in need of work, when, in truth, their souls were starving for the education and emancipation that lies in work. But how could I give them this truth which would seem to them a stone instead of the food they asked? Out of my own exhaustion, ceaseless activity, which forbade reading books any longer, or taking a holiday, or writing letters to dear friends for want of time and energy being coincident, grew a quick sympathy for others; I learned to read between the lines, and as I took up each letter—they were usually piled upside down and drawn in turn, as if they were inverted cards, lest I should pick out the easy ones, and let the difficult ones go over into the next day that would bring its full quota—I used to pause, holding it a moment in my hand, and ask

inwardly how I should answer it. Sometimes I was astonished at my own message when written, and questioned its prudence, for it seemed to pierce through the outward questions down to an unspoken need below; but times without number came a second letter to tell me that my poor word had brought light and hope in a dark hour.

It was then that I learned that there are two kinds of giving—the usual one is where we pass on what we no longer value, or have in surplus quantity—a sort of unloading on others what may be a burden to the recipient as it was to us. The other is the sharing with others what is too precious to keep for private use. All fine and beautiful things come under this head: the poet's song, the inspiration of artist and musician, the new discoveries in science and medicine, the spiritual message that has enriched life, and may I add, the special knowledge that is given to the craft worker when he pursues his work reverently? He who gives freely of these is never impoverished, but rather opens his channel for more enrichment. If he is disobedient to the vision, it may depart and the door upon a larger life may close.

Yet there were times when I staggered under the too heavy burden, and it seemed as if I must take off the pack to see if all its weight were intended for my shoulders to bear, and then something like

this would happen, which made me hesitate to shirk any of the burden, for I could not measure the value of a word, nor decide who needed it most. At the close of a particularly hard day I had written my ninth letter after tea, and could scarcely see for the fatigue of mind, and several yet remained unanswered; but, thinking to ease the next day's pressure, I took up the tenth, which, at great length, stated that the writer had gone twice to a distant city in the hope of seeing my work on exhibition, but was unable to find it either time. She lived in a remote rural community where she seldom saw anything worth while; would I please advise her, and so on and on, and inclosed was a bit from an old gown that she wanted to use in a rug. I was so tired and nervous, that the request, coming at that late hour of the night angered me, and I exclaimed: "Has the public no mercy? Is it possible they think I am responsible for their rag-bags?" and I stormed violently. Then he, who is always the calm antithesis of myself, said: "Why not? perhaps you can help her." "Ah," thought I, "I am not in the mood to help any one, and it is easy to counsel brotherly kindness when it is not your head that rebels in pain"; and then as I continued to chew my angry cud, I thought: "If this were a contribution box passed for a needy person, I should probably put in my mite; but, as I have

no money to give any one, I am asked to give the things I have—my experience and advice.” Well, I sighed heavily over these uncomfortable possessions, but rose, and taking down my color book, where I keep samples of each dye formula, tiny scraps that are carefully treasured, I cut off bits that harmonized with her color; then I drew a little design, explained what constituted good ornament, and what one should avoid; in short, I made full expiation for my explosion of wrath, and even put on postage that had been overlooked in the eager request. What a letter it was that came in reply! full of honest gratitude that said how much the advice had been to her; and not to her alone, but to the whole neighborhood; for they had all been working blindly, and could not see their mistakes before. What a joy it was to realize that I could help, and had done so, to the best of my ability! Again and again, when discouraged and exhausted, evidences came to show that a word could lift the burden—and could I refrain? nay, nay—though I perished, I could not. And yet I did nearly perish, for, at the end of seven years, I went down under the unremitting burden—not of work, but from bitter revolt against the work. It is the protest that wears us out, and lays us low. Yet even then I could not escape it, though the writing of a postal card would put me on my back

for a day, and a caller would leave me a wreck for a week; I had to carry my charge through three years of physical collapse, and rise, as best I could, with the burden still nestled in my arms. I was to learn through actual suffering what toiling humanity suffers; what it means to be too much fatigued to read the book that should bring relaxation; what it is to be driven by necessity when the body is worn and the soul is sick. How my heart went out to the worker everywhere—that class which, in my palmy days, I had thought to be inferior, merely because it worked. Surely I needed just this lesson; and I am thankful that I was not allowed to pass out of life with such false judgment, and total lack of sympathy in my heart.

You, who long to do something worth while, to make your name known, have you any idea of the heavy demands that will be laid upon you? You think the praise of your fellow-men is sweet; have you any conception of the cost? Not until we are willing to relinquish self, to serve without reward, to see only our brother and his need, are we trusted to do even a small thing. Do you still cling to the little comforts of life? Have you lost the power to wound? Do you walk by sight, and not by faith? Then is your hour delayed, and you alone hinder the fulfilment of your wish.

Human nature must flower before it can bear

fruit, though many are trying to fruit before they flower. They refuse to see that outward expression is but a reflection of the inward state, that perfect and natural fruition is possible only when the nature is beautiful and symmetrical and at peace with itself. A portion of society to-day is mad for service at any cost. Sacrificing domestic happiness and repose, restless and dissatisfied women are bitten with a desire to do things, and they work—work hard with but half-opened eyes that cannot see how mediocre the results are. They suffer real travail pains in bringing forth their small philanthropies and reforms—too often stillborn. It would quiet their feverish minds, if they could study some man or woman of genius—one who has true spiritual insight and power, genius, that is but a human channel of divine inspiration. All that flows from him is spontaneous and easily accomplished; the mere doing is a joy. It is inevitable that he should surpass others in work, just as he transcends them in soul. He does not saw off a masterpiece as if it were cordwood; he merely transcribes his visions, the inspirations, the messages that come in times of receptivity.

I had not reached a point where I could realize this truth, otherwise I should not have found my task so hard; yet it had many amenities, in the



curious things that were revealed to me as I worked with hands while the mind was open to impressions. One of them was that, on days when I was in hot revolt against conditions, I could not manifest harmony in my color combinations, even though I used old and tried dye formulas. Something was always lacking, or sometimes everything went wrong, and the whole morning was wasted; for the coloring would have an edge, and it was impossible to achieve the perfect blending of tones for which I strove. Also I made the discovery that the electricity of the left hand is different from that of the right, to such an extent that, if cloth were gathered in the two hands, before dropping it into the kettle, though it were done at the same time, and both treated alike, yet that of the left hand would be perceptibly different in tone from that of the right. Also I observed the results of different degrees of temperature upon certain colors. We touch upon many mysteries when we use this force, heat; and it is the source of endless disaster to the dyer until he has mastered it. And what analogies and correspondences we encounter as we progress along the path of craftsmanship! In time through patience, we work our will like magicians; we create out of the unseen our dreams and fancies; yet what we spread before the eyes is but a faint likeness

of the idea we have tried to materialize; and when we become masters in this lower realm of matter, when we have surmounted all difficulties, think you that we can impart the mysteries to our generation who are eager to follow us by some easier way? No ear is so willing, no tongue so eloquent, that the secrets can be told. The true secrets are incommunicable, save in a finer speech, to which the public ear is deaf; but, perchance, if we continue loyal to the trust, we may be led into still higher forms of creation later on.



## PURGATION

“AND if a branch beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” This law of husbandry is not only applicable to humanity, but throws a search-light upon many of the painful experiences that man must pass through. I never apply the pruning knife in my garden that I do not send out a thought to my plant, similar to the encouraging word that a surgeon gives to his patient. Growth takes so many forms, and becomes so complex when observed in humanity, that it is well to study its laws in the vegetable world if we wish to understand the actual working principles.

A plant, under the enthusiasm of its first intention, often assumes a straggling, awkward form. It is good honest growth, but does not fulfil the gardener's plan; so it is cut back, headed in, and, for a time, looks maimed, almost destroyed. But all along the stem are dormant buds that found no expression when the vitality was coursing through to the terminal branch; now that it is cut off, the life within must find vent somewhere, and each lateral bud feels the impulse, and speedily becomes a channel through which sap shall flow; and what

was a long weedy growth becomes bushy, compact, and symmetrical. Do we not see exactly this thing everywhere about us, in human relations particularly? Take, for example, a family where the head is removed, the one who has carried the burdens, who has been the motive power, upon which all its members were dependent and subordinate. Immediately the necessity is laid on each one to lead a more independent life, and take his place as a separate individual. Or, following up the individual who has leaned heavily upon another for wisdom, encouragement, and sympathy; a person may reach middle age without realizing that such a life may be almost parasitic. It is incapable of independent thought or action; yet when the hour of pruning is past, and the wound is healed, many unsuspected dormant buds of activity will burst forth; the individual desires, so long suppressed, will assert themselves, and the one who needed a support, becomes a strong arm for others.

In human plans this holds true also: we map out a course of action that, with our limited experience, seems big enough to employ all our capacities; and then some obstacle thwarts us, or cuts us short; yet the urge within must have some vent, and we are forced into other and, often, larger activities. Such was my experience in my industrial experiment. The first plan was merely to give profitable

home employment to a few women who, during long and rigorous winters, had leisure hours and no occupation of genuine interest. Without capital, I had no intention of playing philanthropist: I simply wanted to render friendly service to others about me in the only way I knew how, and if it took eighteen months to make my purpose clear, that was my fault.

As time went on, it became evident that, what was planned as a small local enterprise, had a genuine interest for other communities, and I was besieged with all sorts of inquiries ranging from women's clubs and organizations that wanted data or examples for exhibition, to those who were drawn because they needed work. As I was not only limited, but really pinched for funds, it was impossible for me to extend the industry elsewhere; moreover it was never my intention to establish a business enterprise on a large scale; I was not working for my own profit. This was, and always has been, a service for others. The appeals became so importunate, and I was so helpless to meet them adequately—for my methods could not be explained in a brief letter—that it was really disturbing to observe the forces that I had unwittingly set at work. Every letter was scrupulously answered, if it were no more than to express regret that so little could be given in the way of explana-

tion. There seemed no way out of the complication; for, meantime, my own orders had piled up, my gratuitous instruction and materials were extended to more and more workers, and it looked as if I should be overwhelmed by the immediate duty at hand. Then affairs took a most unexpected turn.

I was asked to give an address in a certain city, which I did; and, after it was over, a number of people gathered about the platform to ask questions, and among them a reporter who arrived too late to hear any of the address; so she stood aside and picked up what she could glean from replies to this and that one. One questioner touched upon a certain condition among mountaineers in the South, and asked me if our Northern population was like theirs, and my reply was a distinct compliment to the New England people. But the reporter did not quite catch my reply and gave it her own form—a very simple, harmless thing in the mind of reporters, but which amounts to actual crime at times because of the enormity of its effects. There was no roar of thunder, no crash of lightning at that moment, to warn me of the coming storm in consequence of her careless pencil; and if there had been, I am not sure that my senses would have perceived the din, for my heart was torn by quite another sorrow. A famous diagnostician,

after careful examination, had just pronounced the life of my husband in the gravest peril from angina pectoris, and I was given to understand that while there was a brief possible reprieve, it was merely a question of very short time when it would terminate fatally.

As we pursued our journey homeward, after a month's absence, our train was stalled by a snow-storm of the preceding day, and it was a matter of uncertainty if we should get through that day; but we did, though we arrived several hours late, after dark, with a three-mile drive still before us through steep mountain roads in a mid-winter night. I noted the very unusual sight of drifts piled higher than my head about the station, then heard that fifty inches of snow had fallen during the previous three days, which, with the winter's accumulation, made the snow five feet on the level, with occasional drifts much deeper. Few of my readers have the slightest conception of what this means.

The mere effort of walking a few feet and getting into the sleigh brought on one of the dreaded attacks, and I applied stimulants, and then, crowded three on a seat, we started on what was the most terrible experience of my whole life. The horse could go but a step at a time, and even then he would often miss



his footing, and sink almost to the level of his back. A keen cutting north wind blew in our faces—a particularly dangerous condition for my patient—and at long intervals a faint beacon light would shine out from a remote cottage window, and then we would enter long stretches of wilderness. With each house that we passed I left hope behind, but on we went until the sleigh stuck fast in a drift. My heart stood still with fear; for once, when this had happened a few winters before, in trying to free ourselves, the swingle tree was torn off, and we had to go home on foot, and I knew that neither of us could take a single step in those terrifying drifts. Our trusty driver, a giant of strength, leaped out, trampled the snow down, and lifted the runner, and we were saved—for the moment. Again and again this happened. How I prayed—every moment heart and soul and spirit laid hold of high heaven in wild, silent importunity. There was no moon, but overhead the stars winked and blinked, and everywhere were unbroken fields of snow that hid the fences and made low mounds of trees and bushes, alternated with black, impenetrable forests.

Then a strangely beautiful thing occurred. While my lower mind was panic-stricken, and continued to cry momentarily for help, there came a

strong revelation of the Higher Self that brought not only a sense of absolute security, but a peace and sweet confidence that surpassed anything I had ever known; and it seemed as if the air about me was filled with white wings and seraphic presences. It recalled Christmas cards, and pictures of saintly visions, of Madonnas surrounded by winged cherubs: I tax my imagination without finding a parallel.


Finally, after a drive of two hours, we came to the turn of our private lane that winds up a steep hill, and is a third of a mile long. At this moment the sleigh overturned completely, and we were all thrown out. My only thought was for the beloved one, and again I gave stimulants, and when we were righted our driver said cheerily: "The snow is so deep in the lane it isn't safe for three of us to drive up; it hasn't been plowed out for weeks until this noon; I'll get out"—and out he got, before I could protest. I was so dazed by the suddenness of his act that it seemed as if he had deserted us altogether, though in reality he followed close behind us all the way. And then began a ride that was madder than the Erl King's. Giving the horse free rein, letting him pick his own way in the darkness, holding on to the reins at arm's length, for it was a deep old-fashioned sleigh, not knowing whether my husband was dead or alive by my side,

we plunged this way and that. Sometimes the horse lost his footing, and seemed almost to disappear from sight; then we rode on the tops of drifts six feet high, where we cut in unequally, almost to the point of overturning. I knew if we got lodged in a drift that it was all over with us, for a sick man could not wait there in the piercing cold while I went almost a mile for help; I did not realize that our driver was at hand. On we went until we saw the gleam of our own cottage lights—for there is an end to everything—and when I heard my husband speak and knew he was still alive, my strength utterly failed me; I could not walk, but had to lean against the wall and gasp for breath—and give thanks that we were safe.

Once indoors, and warmed and fed, it seemed as if nothing in life could count since we had been snatched from this horrible peril; and then, while still shaking from fear, I learned from my maid, who was a native woman, that the reporter's account had been copied into weekly papers, and had thus reached my community, and a copy had been carefully handed about from one to another; that it had given mortal offense, and all my work women save two had turned against me. Not one biting criticism was I spared; every word of malicious gossip of the whole countryside was heaped up and poured out on my innocent

head at this cruel hour. This last stroke quite broke my heart—I felt stunned and crushed under the blow, dealt so savagely by those for whom I had toiled almost four years, to whom I had given unceasing praise and credit: this was my reward. I was not only repudiated, but lied about most shamefully, and not one miserable tattle was forgotten. I can only say that the physical shock of that tragic night, with its double suffering, was so great that, to this day, ten years after, my hand has never recovered a normal state, and often shakes as if with the palsy.

Then I knew what it was to be despised and rejected by a community for whom I had made great personal sacrifice. I made no defense; if my conduct had not been a proof of my good will, a guarantee of warm personal interest, nothing that could be said or done at this unfortunate moment would alter the antagonism. It was evident that a hostile spirit had been long slumbering, and only needed a spark to bring about an explosion; and words would only add fuel to the flames. How hard it is to remain silent under injustice, to make no protest against false accusations; yet it is a valuable discipline in self-control, and twice blessed, if, after the storm is past, one can go on and continue favors as if nothing had happened, to silence even the memory of personal



insults, to forgive the slanderer, to love the enemy.

Mine is no uncommon experience. Every life that has sought to consecrate itself to service has to taste this cup. It is not that people are cruel and ungrateful; the soul needs purgation, and the blow is delivered at a vulnerable point. One must have proof that he is not working for self, that he is willing to serve regardless of praise or blame, and in this knowledge rises superior to conditions and grows strong and fearless, caring naught for the censure or ingratitude of others, but follows the Gleam no matter where it leads. No one knows his own strength until the ordeal of rejection has been met; and you who have passed through it, will understand how impersonal your life purpose becomes after that day. You no longer serve men, but an ideal; it makes no difference who takes or leaves your ministrations; you are free, once and for all, from the bondage of public opinion. Dearly is liberation bought, but it is worth all price.

It took months to recover enough from this revelation to see my way clearly. It was evident that things must change; I could not hope to conciliate those who were embittered against me; and, already, the door was open elsewhere. There were many people, who were eager for what I had to

give, who would gladly make use of my services; and to them I turned. From my own immediate circle I looked upon the whole country as a future field of operation. From that time my production of work was greatly diminished, and I began a general educational movement which I have followed ever since. The new work generally meant little or nothing to me financially; it involved hours every day in answering letters, in giving advice to people in distant States; but, so long as my daily comfort was provided for, I felt impelled to give it. And here is a point where my friends have seriously questioned my judgment; they continually ask why I give my experience, my methods without reserve; why I do not guard them, and turn my energies toward the building up of a great business that would make me rich in a few years, instead of giving my time without recompense to the general public. The reason I did not, was, because, I could not. My desire was not to make a novelty to catch the eye of the rug-hungry public, but to develop a product that opened a new avenue of employment to women, who for various reasons could not enter the commercial arena. My whole soul was going out to those who needed help, and had no money to pay; they are not the submerged tenth of the slums; they are the little ones by the waysides of life, the shut-ins,

those who have home ties that cannot be ignored, the timid, who cannot assert themselves in the market place—all laboring under great restrictions, yet have daily needs to be met; and in confidence they turned to me because they had heard that I would do all in my power to serve them. Can you measure against the privilege of working thus the establishment of another factory, even though it employed hundreds of women? We have factories enough—enough stifling atmospheres and herded operators; but hands that give without thought of reward, hands that are obedient to minds growing sensitive to deeper needs than the physical ones—of these the world has never enough. And of what use is more money to one who no longer cares for mere self-gratification? Simple food, plain attire suited to the working life, sufficient warmth for comfort—these things take very little money, and one need not waste his life energy in procuring a surplus that would defeat his dearest aims.

So this is what the great Gardener did; he cut short the main stock of my original purpose, close to the ground, and, in its place, has sprung up a multitude of branches that have taken root all over our country.

There was yet another lesson at hand that was almost as valuable as the one just related, and it

came just as I was recovering from the first. I am not relating these experiences to pile up the agony, but to show what sweet fruit springs from bitter seeds.

In the early spring of that same year my maid was taken ill and left me; then the man in our employ was seriously hurt in chopping a tree, and had to leave us for treatment; then some valuable property, upon which we had counted to bring in a moderate income, was sold at half its value, and through a painful complication with a greedy millionaire some prized old furniture was needlessly sacrificed, and finally I was left alone in our cottage almost a mile from a neighbor, with my husband ill with a dangerous malady. Surely the bottom had dropped out of things. I was carrying on my industry, writing letters, doing my housework, with no one to whom I could confide my fears; and I brooded over them day and night, for I knew not what day my sun would go down. Added to the work of the day, I could not sleep, and sometimes it was two and three o'clock in the morning before I could drop my burden. My husband knew nothing of his own case or peril, and did not guess my distress. One day he said: "My dear, you seem depressed; is anything troubling you?"

"Depressed," thought I, bitterly, "agonized is



the true word;" but I answered lightly, "Am I? Well, I must try to take it in hand, and throw it off."

Ah, yes; easy to say, but how? Yet it must be done, for I could not let my shadow fall upon him, when his own need was so great. So I meditated upon it. What was the root of the trouble? The outward conditions were obviously bad enough; but what was the secret need? Finally I saw that it was peace—that fine flower of a serene, spiritual life. I took a large piece of paper and wrote out in bold printed letters:

I MAKE MY OWN PEACE AND SUCCESS

I AM RICH

It was so absurd when I got it down, so perfectly ridiculous in view of the tragic situation that I laughed aloud—it was so deliciously humorous; but the laugh did me good; it took the corrugations from between the eyes, and relaxed the tension. It was such a luxury to laugh that I placed the placard where it could be seen, as I passed in and out, and every time I looked at it, the load seemed lifted for the moment. Then I repeated the sentences aloud many times a day as I went about my work until I really felt the truth of them, and began to sing softly to myself. About ten days later my

husband said, "My dear, how gay you seem; you are quite like your old self."

I replied: "I am not at all my old self, for I have found a great secret. I make my own peace, when I thought it depended upon one's surroundings"; then we laughed together; for he thought it was merely one of my fantastic jokes. But there was no joke about it—it was a beautiful heaven-sent truth, and proven in the very teeth of the hard conditions. I determined, so long as my sun still shone, that I should rejoice in the light, no matter what the morrow should be. That sentence worked a miracle in my mind, and fortified me anew in a recognition that we ourselves are the only agents in the creation of our interior world; that we can darken our windows with fear and gloom, or we can flood our life with sunshine until our worst adversaries will take flight.

Nothing helps one more surely than to establish a thought by singing it to a soft little melody, which not only soothes, but seems to bring one into relation with harmonious currents. For years I combated a certain antagonism earnestly, but unsuccessfully, and just when I was sure I had mastered, it would rise and slay me anew. At last I chose a few lines of a favorite hymn, and every time that miserable thought rose I sang those lines until I had conquered myself—sometimes it took

half an hour's hard battle several times a day, for I am a strong hater; then a few minutes served at long intervals; and need I say? my old enemy was finally vanquished, I hope forever.

v

## IN THE HOUR OF NEED

I HESITATE, when reaching this point of my life; for what I am about to relate is so intimate, so poignant, that it seems well-nigh impossible to convey the inner meaning of it, particularly to those who live by accepted conventional standards; yet, as the experience of one is the possible experience of all, I cannot well omit this important incident; for out of it sprang a stronger faith, a surer trust that will never be lost; and some of my unknown readers, to whom my heart goes out, may need just the help that my recital can give; so I must not withhold it.

For six years I had been learning to walk by faith; it is easy to believe in the sun when it is shining; it is natural to trust the solid earth under our feet; but, in these six years, many of the solid supports had been cut away one by one. First, the natural support of the old home life, out of which I passed on my marriage, was already crumbling on the verge of financial ruin, so that I could not regard the once-ample family purse as a future resource, if needed. Then my husband's very moderate expectations were cut in two, leaving a scanty

income for three persons. I suffered a still more personal loss within a few years, in having my small savings, so laboriously earned, swept away in a single bad investment, but fortunately this came later, when I was more inured to misfortune. Only those who have had a sheltered or luxurious youth can know the actual terror one feels when earthly possessions take flight. So much worldly emphasis has been laid upon the necessity of creature comforts, on the indulgence of physical enjoyments, that when the wherewithal disappears, one feels as if everything is lost. Nothing is more false than this mode of looking at life; yet few things are more painful than an emergence from it into the truth.

Then I had the painful awakening to the fact that benevolence and gratitude are not inseparable companions; yet severe as these blows were, they left me untouched as compared with one that now threatened me; for the very ground under my feet trembled in the knowledge that the two years, which had been granted as the utmost respite to the one life dear to me, were drawing to a close; and when we started South that last winter in the hope that a warm climate might bring relief, I realized what it is to walk out on a veritable tight rope of faith. Behind us lay the quiet shelter of a home made impossible by climatic conditions—

before us lay, what? I was dizzy with the long strain and perplexities, and had no heart to look up, for the sky overhead was threatening.

I had, before this, developed considerable healing power in my touch, sometimes being able to remove acute pain in a few minutes, and headaches, that required opiates to relieve; but my efforts in this particular case, where the need was so urgent, were of no avail, and I no longer tried to use the power. I shall not rehearse the futile struggle with my fears, the sense of isolation and helplessness in a world strange to me, the increasing encroachment of the disease, until it became almost a daily occurrence; when I dared not think, because a sleepless night would so poison the system that I could scarcely move for rheumatism. It took me some time to perceive that a mind, trained to concentration, must hold itself in poise, else, if allowed to turn upon itself, it can be a deadly engine of destruction. If the power is misapplied in fear, anger, or any base emotion, it can paralyze the action of vital organs, arrest their functions just in the measure that one has previously learned, and then fails to use self-control. Again and again I was roused from deep slumber to minister with hands that trembled so that I could scarcely light a lamp. Through all those months I never had time to summon a physician; I had remedies at

hand, and knew how to use them, but was absolutely alone, with no friend at hand to cheer, not daring to face my own thought, for it crippled me, never knowing but that each attack might be the last—surely my need was sore. In vain does the sun shine in a warm Southern land, in vain do flowers bloom out of season, in vain do strains of music waft in through the windows on moonlit nights when we are crying out for the life of the beloved one. An English surgeon, whom I consulted, gave no hope: his verdict agreed with what others had given—all were inexorable; and I was living in a daily quivering expectancy of the worst.

One night, when particularly depressed—for my patient had been housed for days, and it was necessary to carry his meals to our little apartment—a violent attack was made at the public table on Mrs. Eddy. Now, I am no defender of Mrs. Eddy; her teachings are not for me; yet I knew that the wanton criticism of her must hurt some one in that room, for it was a place where convalescents went to recover health, and it stung me to the quick that any one should try to weaken a prop upon which another leaned, and I returned to our rooms raging like a tigress. I paced up and down denouncing the cruelty and bad taste of such remarks in such a place. Suddenly I turned to my patient, who sat overwhelmed by my vehemence, and said: "What

do petty minds like that know of the power of the Spirit in the matter of disease? So far from questioning that it is Spirit that heals, there is nothing else in this wide world that has potency save Spirit—and I mean to prove it. I have been too exhausted physically, and blind, to see my duty before, and to assert my faith; but now that I am somewhat restored, I mean to dedicate all my energies to your recovery; you shall know, and these people shall know the healing power of the Spirit."

Yet, when my anger was spent, and calm reflection came, my hot words seemed an idle boast. Had I not prayed for his life? What more could I do to lay hold on heavenly powers; and who could intercede successfully for me with the Holy One? Though a blank wall of doubt rose, I could not dismiss the conviction that what I desired was possible. I knew that remarkable cures had been wrought through prayer and other modes of treatment, which were, of course, in obedience to definite laws; but as to the proper method of procedure I had no clue. For days I asked myself, how is it done? Having no one to advise me, and being ignorant of the teachings regarding mental and spiritual healing, I turned to the inward light: "Teach me, show me the way," was my consuming thought; and I waited for direction, believing that



it would come. Then I remembered how I had changed my attitude toward a difficult environment by an affirmation of peace, and felt that something of this kind might be of help. I waited for the right words; for, while I wanted to avail myself to the utmost of faith, I could not do violence to reason at this critical moment by making false assertions. To be effective, I realized that an affirmation must rise from the very depths of one's being; another's expression will not avail, it must be one's own, worded as succinctly as possible, and convey the very essence of the personal need. After much sifting and rejection I lettered a large sheet of paper thus:—

### THE SPIRIT CAN CHECK ANY DISEASE OF THE BODY

then I studied it word at a time. There was no claim there that I did not absolutely believe. I hesitated to say *cure* any disease, in face of expert medical opinion, and my own ignorance of the operation of healing forces; but it seemed a great gain if we could hold it in abeyance a little longer—if only until we could get home.

I placed the placard before the eyes of the sufferer, and said: "You do not believe in this sort of thing—I do; all I ask of you is, that you shall

simply look at these words from time to time in a negative and passive way. Do not combat the idea, nor question it. Forget your prejudices, and just look at it as you do at a chair or a door knob." Then I would go alone for a short walk, and open my heart in prayer for light and faith and courage. Within two days I was calmer, steadier, and more hopeful. Then I made a bolder statement:—

### SPIRIT HAS ALL POWER

#### I AM FILLED WITH THE DIVINE ENERGY

and a little later I reached the conviction that, when we are strong in faith, we become channels for the divine energy, and I wrote:

#### HEALING POWER FLOWS THROUGH ME TO OTHERS

I could not have said that honestly at first, but when we give up ourselves unreservedly, when we reach out to the very stars at night, when the winds catch up our prayers, and carry them to the Source of Strength, we grow bold, we open ourselves to things undreamed before, and become servants of the Most High.

To my amazement and joy the patient began to mend, and from having six attacks in a single week, they fell off to one; then one in two weeks, then one a month, and the physical improvement was so marked that every one who knew us commented on it. In my heart I said, "Not I, but the Spirit within me doeth this work." Buoyed up by new hope, we prepared to make our long journey North. On the eve of our departure, depressed with the fatigue of packing, I was seized with my old horror, that black thought of the midnight hour, the fear that while on the journey an attack might result in a state of coma, mistaken for—I could not even think the word, and that we should be bundled off the train at the next station, and,—and—I could never touch the bottom of that terrible thought. I lost my poise altogether, my hard-won faith and trust; and the inevitable happened. While we were waiting on the piazza for the electric car to take us the seven miles to connect with the main line of the railroad, one of those grim terrors appeared. How I prayed that something would delay the car—and it was ten minutes late; but the attack was not yet abated when the car came in sight; yet with baggage gone, and our rooms vacated, there was no alternative but to go.

Once on the train, all went well for that day. We had to break our journey thrice before we

reached Boston, first at a hotel and later with friends, and at the second stop we had such alarming experiences that I was sure the end had come. Yet we could not tarry on the journey, for conditions were most unfavorable for the sick man, and people seemed to have a fear of us; and when we began once more, it was with the greatest difficulty that we got into the train, and my patient was propped up with pillows. I can conceive of nothing more heart breaking than to travel alone on a scanty purse with a loved one whose life is in mortal peril.

The car was full and I could get no seat except in front of my husband, where I sat palpitating with fear, not daring to look around lest I should betray my terror, and not knowing how he was as he leaned back with closed eyes and helpless. And pray! there was nothing else to do. I thought I had known before something of prayer in extremity, but former importunities were but a preparation for this wild moment. In the midst of the tumult, the Voice spoke, "Calm yourself; you are destroying him with your fears." Strange that I had never taken that into consideration; at once I could understand if he and I were sufficiently *en rapport* for him to feel the healing power, I could also buffet him with destructive waves of thought. In an instant, I was calm and strong,

for the message acted like a miracle upon me, and again my old faith was restored. I knew then that I was not alone on that journey, and the blessedness of that knowledge was beyond words.

As I have said before, all through my life actual experience has preceded knowledge. I made use of automatic writing, and learned its conditions almost a year before I knew its name; I learned the use and practical application of passivity and receptivity before I understood their necessity. The strange thrilling pranic force manifested itself before I heard that it existed; I proved the value of affirmation before I knew that it was a recognized aid in spiritual development; I had heard the Voice long, long before others corroborated the truth of its existence. And now I was under tutelage, through my Higher Self, in regard to truths connected with the power of healing, without a word of other instruction. When one can raise and hold himself through constant earnest prayer to the plane of the spiritual mind, or, as some call it, the mental body, others, the causal body—it has many names and is widely recognized—so long as he is poised and trustful, he can not only receive the vibrations of healing forces from spiritual currents, but he can address and arouse the spiritual mind of another to such a degree that these higher vibrations may be transmitted to

the other by him. The moment the healer descends, the hold is lost for both; for, in a weakened state, a patient cannot of himself easily respond to such high vibrations. Of this matter of response to vibration I shall speak more at length later.

In an instant I saw the whole truth. My fear had intensified the suffering from the first; my anxious thought had been like a battering ram, breaking another to pieces; and it was only when I had let go, and had yielded myself unreservedly to the training of the Spirit, and replaced resistance with absolute trust, that the poor defenceless body, toward which my thought force was directed, was able to relax, and receive healing. I did not speak of the message I had received, yet the mental reaction from it upon us both was so marked and complete that I forgot that I ever had a fear, and within two hours we lunched together in the dining-car as happily and care-free as if on a holiday journey.

There remained but one final experience just on the eve of the last portion of our tedious journey, when, in a crisis, I grasped the reality of the existence of spirit; I saw that the body was but a tenement, a mere shell inclosing the higher principle; and though that last wrestling with the disease was of such severity that I could scarcely rally my pa-

tient by the aid of amyl and the most powerful stimulants known, yet from that night the malady left him, and though ten years have passed, it has recurred but three or four times, only as a faint echo of the former agony, and no shadow, save of the inevitable close of the day that awaits us all, rests upon us. At first I could scarcely believe that a permanent release had come; it took months and even years to convince me. Did I stand alone in a distrustful skepticism of the power of God? Do we not all make a brave spiritual fight for our faith in one breath, and almost repudiate the possibility of an intervention in our behalf in the next?

What do I make of this incident after a calm reflection upon it? Only this: there is no extremity into which we are drawn where we cannot get absolute response if our whole heart goes out in request. We may not get our desire, *but we do get an answer*. Mere words, or much speaking count for nothing; but the heavens are not silent to a vitalized emotion that wings its way like an arrow into the unknown regions of the soul. It is very hard for those of us who are just beginning to assert an implicit faith in prayer, if we have been reared under the orthodox teaching that a remote God jealously demands that we use the roundabout delay of a mediator in approaching Him; when our need is urgent, we haven't a minute to lose. A soul

may have gone a long way upon the Path, and yet be reluctant to confide his all directly into the hands of the orthodox God of uncertain temper, still offended with the human race after the cooling lapse of thousands of years; still cherishing an old grudge against the children of Adam. Our intellect may disclaim such a hideous perversion of the character of Deity, yet the old instinct of doubt warns us against placing unreserved confidence in hoped-for results, in view of the oft-repeated injunction to say: "Thy will be done," which is the orthodox way of accounting for the frequent miscarriage of prayers; it places the failure upon God's unwillingness to co-operate with us, instead of teaching that true prayer, rising from the spirit, and not from lips, must and does reach the ear of heaven; that we have a right to a definite answer, but that faith alone makes it possible. Orthodoxy has never gone far enough; it advises men to lower their voices and tread softly, when theirs is the right to cry aloud: "Abba, Father!"

When my prayers have been answered, or when words are spoken to the inner ear, I have not attempted to locate their source. Enough for me that the wisdom comes from a level beyond my ken, and I ask not that Deity stoop from high heaven to make the message divine. There may be other agencies, other intelligences, it may be even



my own Higher Self intrusted under divine commission to teach me and to watch over my destiny. The thought of intermediate agencies, whose operations are inconceivably beyond my imagination, elevates Deity far beyond my old idea of the Trinity. These lesser intelligences are evidently so high, so true, so powerful that anything beyond them becomes at once incomparable, unthinkable: we lose ourselves.

We rest happy when a danger is past, and for a season live the reasonable life of faith; but again and again we waver, for experiences do not repeat themselves, and new difficulties arise, and when we have used a staff, the way grows hard without it. Yet if we had the daily miracle, the constant intervention, when and how should we learn to use our own feet? While it is true that aid is always at hand, only as we reach out to take it does it become manifest; some live a whole lifetime without a convincing answer because they do not demand it in faith. When we look at our career in retrospect, we see plain evidences of the workings of the Higher Self; but in the hurried confusion of daily life, in the midst of sordid pursuits and worldly influences, it is hard to hold fast to the vision; it is crowded out, or grows blurred, or other interpretations are substituted.

Some will doubtless scoff at my narrative, ques-

tion the reality of the disease, deny the validity or permanence of the cure: I care not for their opinion, which is based upon the general verdict. This alone I know—I prayed earnestly that the disease should be held in abeyance, and relief came as an answer, I know not how, unless by the means described; and through the lifting of this black pall I realized the presence and power of the Spirit to help in a time of extremity. Whatever strengthens our faith is the greatest possible blessing, though it comes as a rainbow to our tears.



## IN THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT

HABIT lays upon us the spell of disenchantment; it dims the eyes, and dulls the perceptions. We had begun to say long before our trip South, that we must go away for a season in order to recover the beauty of our environment; and it was with joy that the old wonder and intoxication with the loveliness of earth and sky greeted me in the home coming; and, added to the joy, was thanksgiving over our escape from the shadow. Never was warm spring air so wooing, nor sunshine so delicious, nor verdure so tender as they seemed in that May season; and I did not realize for some time that a more sensitive inner life began with that first year of the young century; that fresh hope, new aims, and future growth gathered unseen about the threshold to welcome us home.

Deep emotions work radical changes in our natures; when lax strings are under tension, they are capable of a finer harmony, and play more in unison. A metal harmonica placed in a window, where a high wind may sweep all its notes at once, sounds complete octaves of strange ethereal music, instead of single notes; so one's being may be keyed

to respond to nature or events through every sense, also through intellectual and spiritual faculties, if they are attuned, and are delicate enough to catch the full import. All my senses were enjoying a keener perception, and the next five years that were spent in the mountain solitude were rich in emotional experiences. If the intense mental suffering I had passed through made me so sensitive to music that, for a long time, it brought tears rather than pleasure, it also opened my ears to the finer melodies of nature. I discovered that each variety of tree has its own note under a wind; that each wind has a different voice. One whispers, another sings, a third moans and sobs with a human cry; one howls, another roars and booms like artillery. Sometimes the wind plays like a great musician, calling out the low thin notes from tall grasses, from little shrubs, then swings the baton to a few tree-tops first here and then there, up and down the scale, and after drawing out the individual strains, gathers them up in a grand overwhelming chorus that fills the whole heavens; a magnificent orchestral triumph which is only possible on a high hill-top in autumn when leaves are crisp and resonant. Sometimes a wind murmurs at the edge of the forest, or simulates the babble of cascades and running waters; again it comes with a low muffled sound like the distant rattle of the ocean; sometimes

on a still summer day when the sky is veiled in thin white haze, a zephyr will descend into the garden and sit and sing a sweet and tender dirge for those whose feet have passed over. Again it steals at twilight on a summer night among the arbors, and hides beneath the shrubbery, and whispers like a lover. The songs of the wind stir no sad memories, bring no hot tears to the eyes; they meet every mood, and satisfy the heart.

My world had become like a soap bubble of ethereal texture, where prismatic hues played over the surface, and my perceptions of natural objects blended and merged into each other as reflections of a landscape do on a liquid sphere. I found joy in the curling spirals of smoke, ascending, dissolving, and reforming as they rose. Whether it was from the black throat of an engine, or from a log on the hearth, it was wonderful to see, rising out of the transparent stratum of air just above either, a tiny waving streamer of steam or smoke that wreathed and billowed into floating clouds; also to watch the almost imperceptible movement over red embers, a glowing pulsation without form or substance, a symbol of the Spirit, breathing upon the hearts of men; or the quiver of air over a hot slope in summer, or rising from a heated surface indoors, formless, yet visible, casting an all but intangible shade, just as we see on a cool morning

when the breath is not congealed in the air, but is condensed enough to throw a slight diaphanous shadow on the ground. And what can be more ethereal than the wafts of mist in late winter and early spring, the chilling of warm currents of air as they float over melting snows, and wave, and curl upwards like smoke? And where can we turn our eyes without seeing the magic of the world? The haze that loiters among the trees of our Northern mountains is a tender gray blue, deepening into pure blue or purple; in North Carolina pine forests it takes an amethyst hue; in Florida it becomes a warm rose tint; on Long Island it assumes a rich mellow amber tone, merging into the olive browns, beloved by Dutch painters; in Maryland it is gray. Where shall we see such a wealth of color as at a winter sunrise, with mountains clothed in rose, amethyst, and violet, a pale azure blue sky, velvety black tree trunks, the dazzling white of snow tinted with blue shadows, and the tan of tall grasses and dried herbage? Or in a sunset of a single color, a flame of palest rose, a glow of golden transparency; or one merging from blue overhead into pure yellow down to rose and crimson below—color without form, as great a mystery as form without color. And who that has studied the zenith at sunset, and has observed the ineffable tone of blue, seen nowhere else in nature, veiled with floating

mists of white, rose, or saffron clouds, does not rejoice in this last, almost superfluous, touch of beauty in our wonderful world? Whence spring the ethereal streamers of the aurora borealis that play celestial harmonies which our eyes can see, though our ears fail to register the sound? Rising from the unknown world lying just beyond the horizon line, they are no more marvelous than the newly created snowflake that floats down from the unseen hand of the Creator, and rests a moment on our sleeve, and then as mysteriously withdraws from the visible world.

Who can catch and duplicate the tones of rose, tan, amber, and russet-green that clothe meadow and forest just after the first faint touch of frost, before nature's palette is spilled over the landscape? And who can weave such silken textures as gleam in the petals of flowers, those dainty fabrics that lie crumpled in the bud, then flutter out unwrinkled in the morning air?

Surely this was the world for a worn and weary mind to turn to for restoration. But the newly recovered life was not one of passive enjoyment; it was full of interests and activities that continued unabated in all seasons. If we found solace in the glory of summer, we also knew the severity of mountain winters and snow piling up about the cottage almost to the eaves, where it caught in an



angle of the house or a lilac bush; the cheer of ruddy wood fires, and long wavering shadows that moved like ghosts about the rooms; terrific storms that threw themselves against the house and roared like a bombardment, when the timbers would creak and the beams tremble under the crash, and for a moment the winds would pause to gather force, and then roar on over the hill. In the midst of all this tumult I had a sense of peace and protection unknown before. I feared nothing, and desired nothing, save a continuance of the present hour.

It is in the long unbroken winter season that one finds himself, proves his own resources, and opens himself to high influences. Nothing in my life has been so beautiful and satisfying as those days, when, working out new patterns at my frame, my beloved read aloud from the great writers, to which the madding crowd no longer have time to give a hospitable ear:—Emerson, Thoreau, Plutarch, Plato; and never shall I forget our attendance at the trial of Socrates, and his last hours of communion with his friends; and when it came to the fatal moment, it was so real, so tender, so pitiful, that the voice of the reader broke, and he could not proceed; the grief of Socrates' friends was mine, and my tears fell with theirs. Many were the Sunday evenings

devoted to poetry. Over and over again we read our favorite selections from the Greek Anthology, Matthew Arnold, Tennyson, Emerson, Robert Bridges, Rosamund Watson, through to Kipling's Ballads. Grave and gay, philosophic and humorous, they make a beautiful mosaic in my memory. Often we turned out the lamp, and sat by the fire-light, and talked as only those who truly understand each other can talk; or listened to little snatches of song that drifted in from the rear of the house with an accompaniment of the banjo. Outside the sleet might patter against the windows, the wind might howl and moan, but the tiny cottage with blazing wood fires and gleaming andirons, flickering shadows and dusky corners, its two chairs drawn close side by side before the hearth, breathed the spirit of peace and content. Long after the house was silent, the two empty chairs, still in companionable propinquity, and long streamers of white moonlight that filtered across the floor through latticed windows completed the picture of repose and domestic happiness.

Through the winter spent in the South I saw the need of reorganizing my industry, but was not at all clear upon several points. One day, on my return, just as I was waking from a nap, the whole plan lay before me complete in every detail, and proved its source, in that further reflection upon

it added nothing to the original idea as it first came to me. Many times in my life, matters that have been of special value, but never before considered, have presented themselves at a moment of waking. They carry a conviction that silences any doubt or question about their practical working. The suggestion in this instance was to reduce all my methods and experience in my craft to a small textbook which should cover every inquiry that the public had made, and thus take the place of personal instruction to those at a distance; also to furnish at the lowest possible cost reliable materials which would enable others to begin the work with an equipment that it had taken me five years to collect.

Now this sounds like a very easy, practical business proposition, but when you consider that I had no money for such an enterprise, that there was no possible chance of a publisher undertaking a manual of that character, and it must be printed at my own expense, and sold privately, and that to induce a mill to make my special material, I must give a large order, you can judge of the difficulties that attended my waking inspiration: yet they did not deter me. I proceeded to act upon it as if I had ample means at hand, and by the time the MS. for the little manual \* was prepared, suf-

\* "Abnakee Rugs."

ficient money came to me from unexpected sources to pay all the bills. I have sometimes wondered that I, who am naturally cautious and distrustful, could follow a lead so blindly and with such unquestioning faith; but there are positions in life where we act as if we were mere automatons, we scarcely exercise volition; we are moved to do certain things, and we do them as if we were wooden puppets. My whole industrial career has been of this nature, yet the results have justified my confidence: there was nothing else to do at that juncture unless I abandoned the project. I had been making bricks without straw; I had exhibited for more than three years without a competitor, had written reams of letters, and the moment arrived when I must furnish everything, or past effort would be lost, because the difficulties in the way of a beginner were almost insuperable. The new venture gave the assistance necessary to make the work practical, and brought it within easy reach of others, and thus it was spread far and wide. No one was more surprised than I when the little textbook passed into its third edition, having sold itself without the aid of advertising or booksellers.

When one considers the unused energy locked up in thousands of women with home ties, many who have a few hours of leisure, and are eager for employment, yet cannot leave their homes to get it,

it is obvious that the time will come when, as a matter of political economy, measures must be taken to reach their need, and afford them profitable employment in the home, as has been done so wisely in foreign countries. However, not until small individual efforts reveal the situation to the public, can we hope to have the State or U. S. Government give the financial aid and indorsement that are needed in a widespread organization of this reluctantly idle portion of our community.

Then it was that I began to work in real earnest, determined that every stroke should count. No one will ever know the labor of the next five years, the slow recovery of a few of my former workers, the tedious training of new ones, the exhausting days of dyeing, alternated with others given to design, stamping patterns, arranging color schemes, gathering data for those who wanted information, preparing examples for exhibitions which sometimes numbered thirty or more a year, and sandwiched between every duty was a never decreasing pile of correspondence. It was a strenuous season of work and prayer, my spirit as active as my hands, and they worked together.

During the hours of watching the dye kettle, my mind was liberated; it roved here and there, and brought back strange things; with hands occupied,

the subjective mind introduced me to new lines of thought, flashed back answers to the many difficulties that arose continually. It directed me on doubtful subjects, and at times appeared to engage my every-day reasoning mind in conversation, in which unfamiliar topics were discussed, and the real I, quite separate from either, seemed to stand aside like a third person who listens to a dialogue in which it has no share. I began to see how much more there is in this mind of ours than is usually supposed. Those who would confine mental activity to a use of perceptions and reflective faculties, of memory and reason, have no conception of other interesting phases when it goes beyond these useful, prosaic operations. More and more I leaned upon the inner direction, and bade the guide to search out and bring to me what was required. Usually I began the day's work by asking for wisdom and skill; yet it was not altogether prayer in the usual sense; rather was it a profound recognition that the Spirit works within and through us, and I bade it enter and take possession. When work was done in this attitude, I knew neither mental fatigue nor physical exhaustion; but when I forgot, and worked hard in my own strength, things went wrong; I accomplished little and was worn out with the struggle to meet a great variety of perplexing duties.

It was during this season of retirement that a measure of illumination was granted. By this, I mean that spiritual truths began to interpret themselves through dreams and visions at night; also through objects in the natural world about me, revealing by analogy their intimate relation with the spiritual side of life. It was at this time that I began to perceive what was mentioned in a previous chapter, that outward circumstances are but the reflection of the inner state, or that they come to interpret some inner need.

One winter I was especially blessed, for it was my habit, just before retiring, to go to the front door, and looking over the stretches of snow up to the heavens, I would commit myself to spiritual influences, and ask that some truth be given to me through the night. In consequence my dreams were strange and surpassingly beautiful. Often a sister who had passed out guided me through a world where the streets, architecture, gardens, and parks were so extraordinary that I would stop continually to exclaim and admire. In the night world everything was bathed in a radiant white light in which objects cast no shadows. Many things puzzled me, but were explained clearly; in my dreams I always use the reflective faculties just as I do in my waking hours; I know what is reasonable and intelligible and what is not; I ask questions,

and am never left in doubt about causes. Every detail is clear and coherent; there is no confusion, no uncertainty: all is orderly and represents the highest beauty.

I recall one dream of singular interest. An extraordinary volume in a costly and elaborate binding was placed in my hands. When I opened the cover I saw that it was copiously illustrated in transparent colors which sparkled like precious stones. On examining the pictures, they seemed strange yet familiar, for they bore a striking resemblance to certain events in my life—but how transfigured, how glorified! In amazement I addressed one who stood by my side, and asked: "What is this volume?" The answer was: "This is the book of your life." "But the pictures, what are they?" "They represent the poetry of your days." Again I turned to them, and leafed them over and over. Yes, here was a certain memorable experience, but how surpassingly radiant; and another—and many. "But the text; what is that?" I asked. "That is the prose of existence, the everyday living, the common duty that leads up to the poetry, and makes it possible."

When more than half-way through the volume, I was about to examine the remaining pages, for the illustrations continued to the end, and grew even more numerous, when a restraining hand was



laid upon mine, and took the book from me—"Nay, that lies in the future."

Ah, who would weary of the human life if he could but see in it the extra-illustrated edition?

Another time I was restive under the increasing burdens, the ceaseless demands of my work, and was growing rebellious under the long continuance, and this came:—

As I entered a shop containing articles of rare virtu, a woman came forward to greet me, and said: "We have been looking for you. We came across this instrument and recognized it as yours, and we wish you to have it." She handed me a musical instrument of unusual shape and beautiful workmanship, unlike any that I had ever seen. "But," said I, "I cannot claim it, because knowing nothing of music, I do not play, and cannot use it;" and was about to hand it back to her.

"You do not understand," said she, and, taking a long wand, she stepped up to a tall vase and touched it lightly, and the instrument in my hand gave forth a low strain of exquisite music; then she moved about the room, merely touching this and that object, and in response the little instrument poured forth such melodies as my ears had never heard. In a moment I fathomed the truth, and in despair, I said: "As much as I long for

it, I dare not take it; I can never use it, for I am not in harmony with my environment."

Need I say that this dream gave me food for reflection for many a month?

Another time I had taken a volume from a library, and at first glance it seemed to be dull and technical, and I was about to close it, when out from the pages rolled rare seeds of many forms, some polished, others cut like gems. Turning to another page, I saw leaves of extraordinary form and variety of color, and within another I discovered petals of flowers, still moist, with iridescent hues like the gleaming necks of birds. Such a wealth of beauty I had never seen in the natural world, and I was filled with an intense longing to discover the secret of their loveliness, for I saw that by penetrating their essence, one could reach the very heart of nature, and could understand the mysterious source of all beauty. I sought here and there in vain, and my fruitless quest filled me with anguish, when a calm voice said: "Wisdom is granted only to a true child of nature, and Love is the one interpreter."

I grew bolder as experiences multiplied, and sought answers to problems that were unanswerable to the reasoning mind, and they came first as pictorial symbols which were immediately interpreted, sometimes with definite words heard by

the inner ear, sometimes by a long explanation that unfolded itself gradually to the mind. But the answers came usually within three days, more often when first waking from sleep; and the way that I knew that they were veritable answers was that I never had to ask the questions again. They were settled once for all; the matter was made intelligible, and no longer troubled me.

An unusual thing occurred, which puzzled me for a long time, and it was only after I had experienced it for several years that I understood its nature. One night I was passing through a dark room, dwelling upon a certain thought of aspiration, when I perceived to my left, in the darkness, a beautiful pale violet light, unlike anything I had ever seen. It was glowing and expanded from a tiny center to a clear disk, then disappeared. I was of course astonished, for I had never heard of such a thing in any one's experience, and believing it to be an optical illusion, thought nothing about the cause, or possible explanation; but when I saw the light again a few evenings later, it seemed more surprising, and I determined to note the conditions if it reappeared. It came very irregularly, sometimes at long, sometimes at short intervals, but always as the accompaniment of a high thought of aspiration. Later it appeared by day as well as by night, always shining for a single instant against

some dark background, with the same extraordinary luster and tone. Observing the condition of its appearing, I began to measure the altitude of my thought by its coming, and sometimes when my own spiritual vision was dimmed or neglected, it did not visit me for long seasons. It was this which accompanied the message that came when I was mopping the kitchen floor, and the Voice said: "This was but a test." Later still it used to flash at times when I was about to make an important decision, or take some unusual step. Then I knew that I was following the Gleam. Those who have seen colors with the subjective mind can testify how far they transcend the coloring of the material world, which, in comparison, seems dull and opaque. The subjective coloring has a transparency of tone, a delicacy of tint, a radiance for which we have no equivalent.

With all these accompanying tokens, and in view of my past experiences which had tended to prepare me in spiritual perception and an open receptivity, you may imagine what a shock it was to receive the following message. I had been reading for the third time Richard Jeffries' *Story of My Heart*. It was much more intelligible than in readings of former years, for I too had long echoed his cry for more soul life, a truer understanding, and as I neared the end of the volume I read but a

page or two in an evening, for it was a precious companionship that I was reluctant to close; and when the last words were spoken, which were still an expression of the old hunger for righteousness, they awoke the same searching note in my own heart, and I was so overcome with emotion that I slipped out of the room, and stood in the familiar place of prayer—the front door step. “Oh, give! give!” I cried passionately, but the need was too deep to be uttered—there were no words for what I wanted; I was overwhelmed with a desperate sense of impotence and ignorance. While I stood in a whirlwind of emotion, the Voice spoke through the silence: “Learn to receive!”

Never was a more unexpected message transmitted, and never was a disciple more unprepared for it. Receive? Receive? Was I not eager, and wildly clamoring for—yes, for what? for all unattainable things! Nevertheless, the words brought a curious calm, as they always do, and I was left to reflect upon the strange sentence—not merely that night, but for years, before I understood the whole of its meaning.

## THE GARDEN OF DIFFICULTY

IN the second spring after our return from the South, I began a new labor that was to be a source of joy and peculiar value in many ways. I had tried vainly to grow a few favorite flowers and shrubs about the house, but the sterile soil and severe droughts were so unfavorable that I was about to give up their culture, when it occurred to me to gather them together and arrange them in a small area, and thus focus my attentions, as well as the watering pot, in a very practical way. This was the germinal idea, a round little thought that I could hold in my hand, and compass. I caught no glimpse of the future leafing and flowering of the idea which should reach out and transcend a few blossoms; and, after including a large assemblage of floral aristocrats, should make a wider appeal to other flower lovers; and still on it should go, until it touched the very center of my strongest desire.

I was quite doubtful of the wisdom of the project, for my life was already tangled up with duties, and the farm was so endeared, that a garden would be but another link—beloved though it might be

—to bind me still closer to one spot. What I wanted was freedom in the widest sense—freedom without the sting of memory or regret to sadden the after days; and I had an instinctive feeling that where a garden is successful, one can never escape its claim heart-whole. I did not realize that my love of color and beauty was drawing me into a path that would ultimately lead to intuition and vision; nor, that, when one yields his mind to a minute study of plants, silencing reason and speculation, and allows life in its myriad forms to address the soul, spiritual perceptions are evoked, the inner eye and ear are opened, and one is literally awakened to another plane. This form of contemplation differs from the observation which an artist gives his subject; in this the objective mind is passive; there is no effort to record or imitate; it is a state of receptivity which uses the finer faculties, that find so little exercise in the common material duties. These expand through quiet contemplation of the phenomena of growing and fading, through the use of the imagination, through everything that appeals to sentiment, love, and sympathy, and merges the personality into that of living creatures, and unifies it with the Universal Life. A reverent study of the miracles of growth, flowering, and fruiting breaks down the barriers between the seen and unseen, and

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carries a significance which is seldom understood.

All this was a sealed book to me that winter, when a mantle of snow covered the earth—just as a veil hangs before every future—and I made a choice of the prospective Eden, unmindful of possible obstacles that might reveal themselves later; and it was only after I had made definite and elaborate plans, that the veil was removed, and I perceived that what I had chosen was the Garden of Difficulty. The sunny sheltered spot selected was no other than a rock heap where generations of former owners had carted boulders, some weighing a ton, and stones, of which our acres are so richly productive; and a geologic process had gone on during the course of half a century, when a natural deposit of earth had lodged among the rocks, native vegetation had sprung up in the virgin soil, and a newly created, but genuine cosmos already lay in that small tract.

I do not know what my lineage is, but I fancy it includes some good fighters, for my blood was roused when the melting snows laid bare the situation. I buckled on my armor, grasped all the available farm weapons, and fought the good fight until that impossible stone heap was not only vanquished, but a good portion of a rising slope on either side was acquired by lawful conquest. The



war was waged for eight years before peaceable possession was secured; and the enemy is never quite subdued; for there are frequent skirmishes with some of the inhabitants—the aboriginal weeds—who will ever be aliens to the new government; and it takes constant vigilance to protect the rights of the colonists that have been drawn from many lands, and have consented to become permanent citizens therein.


This is but an epitomized summary of a more extensive history of a recent conquest on American soil, which I have just issued under another name; \* and when I observe that a few bald lines contain a condensation of eight years of active engagement, I can see that the real history of human effort is never written. We know nothing of the romance, tragedy, and sacrifice that lie buried in brief random sentences of biography or history; at best we get here and there only a stray dry bone of a fact, never the true intent and experience; and from it we are supposed to construct the living reality, infuse it with breath, animate it with flesh and blood, vitalize it according to our ability. In proof of how little we recover, one has but to consider the contradictory estimates of historians.

In a previous volume I have given the outward form of this creation of my hands; here I shall

\* *Hardy Plants for Cottage Gardens.*

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attempt to show its inner meaning and influence upon my life; for this bit of land, less than seventy-five by a hundred and fifty feet, was to reorganize much of my thought; it was to be my confidante, my instructor, and my pulpit. Here I was to learn order; and arrangement that involved exact knowledge of height, manner of growth, season of flowering, and color of hundreds of varieties of flowers, in order to produce harmony and a succession of bloom; and foresight that would outrun the seasons; to develop a spirit of self-sacrifice that served the little sisters of the earth in all weathers; to perceive the inviolable workings of law and justice; to play a minor Providence in a miniature world, where neglect or ignorance paid swift and sure penalty. I was to learn something of individuality and its claims—for plants have their individual needs the same as men; and patience; for Nature cannot be hurried, and least of all when she is striving for a permanent growth; and pity, for like all else in creation, a garden knows real suffering, even unto death, when the skies are brazen and there is a drought, or the grasshopper is sore in the land; and vision that made the eye and ear sensitive to color and sound, that saw more than beauty in stem or root as well as in blossom; and above all—I was to exercise love, a tender abiding affection that nurtured the tiny seedling, trained



the vigorous growth, rejoiced in the opening bud, stored the harvest seed for another season, and gently separated the dead from the living, gathering the spent forces where they might be conserved into new forms—a love that knew no distinctions, unless it be that it went out in larger measure to the weak and deformed, unwilling that the least should perish. Who is so eloquent that he can recover the hours of such tutelage, and write their history? I can but name them over as I would the dead kings of England, and let your heart and imagination vitalize them.

If it is difficult to convey what a garden was in the development of character, in the enrichment of one's nature, it is even more difficult to communicate the inner teaching which came when an outward symbol was needed to carry a message, just as letters of the alphabet are required to convey an idea. A garden yields much more than color, perfume, and form; it can furnish the clue to many insoluble problems, as the Rosetta stone proved to be the link between the living and forgotten languages.

As I have intimated, when we merge our minds into other intelligences, whether human, animal, or vegetable, we lift the slight veil that separates, and are caught into unknown realms where we perceive Unity. I had not understood my dream,

where I had vainly sought to penetrate the mysterious source of beauty, and for many weeks had puzzled over the message given me, when a momentary glimpse was granted, quite unexpectedly, while I was sitting one morning alone in a Boston drawing-room, reading a sorrowful tale by Lafcadio Hearn of two Japanese lovers who met insuperable difficulties; they were walking toward the railroad track—and when I got so far, the brick walls of that ancient house disappeared, and I passed out into the Universe. Everywhere I saw plant life of many varieties, in full bloom; and wherever I looked was perfection. By a keen insight I penetrated the cause, the essence of perfection which had so long baffled me. I saw that each was a vehicle of the Divine life trying to express itself, each was a veritable and essential manifestation of God, and, as such, must, of necessity, disclose a measure of perfect beauty, perfect adaptation of parts, perfect utility; and the last miracle of creation, the source of beauty was laid before me like an open book which I grasped with complete comprehension for only a single instant, but as quickly lost; for the landscape blurred and receded, and the brick walls closed in upon me, and I was sitting in my chair still absorbed in the coming tragedy. In the distance, an express train was rushing toward the lovers just as they repledged

their eternal vows to each other in their last breath.

Many were the questions I asked in those earlier days, insoluble and perplexing, and the garden was an answer to them. Was it a social injustice, an economic question, or a personal difficulty, the solution was written somewhere on that magic wall. I had been much concerned about one subject that bore heavily upon my life, which was, how far is one justified in concentrating his mind upon money, and how much it was lawful to demand. This practical matter receives so much attention and such a positive answer from the children of this world, that it seems a strange one to raise. But I had faced it again and again, as I had definite need for more; yet something within always restrained me when I thought of concentrating on it; and no mental image of abundance came of itself, as in so many other instances. As we develop, we encounter many strange contradictions of former worldly precept. What was once lawful may become a matter of grave doubt; and each one must make his own readjustments to his growing perceptions of truth. When one begins to live by faith, he must learn to commit himself to its guidance. He must not pray for advice and then run to his next-door neighbor to ask what is best to be done under the circumstances. When he is learn-

ing to stammer—The Lord is all my supply—he must place a little dependence on that budding trust, and not keep an anxious eye on the fluctuations of the stock market, and grow panicky over his business interests. In the same way, when one has proven that he can manifest his deepest desires upon the physical plane, it becomes a vital question how he uses that power, and to what end. If one is not much advanced, he will want the material thing that lies just beyond his grasp; if he is wiser, he raises his eyes higher. Some go too far, and others dare not go far enough, and each pays the penalty: the new life is both to work and to pray.

I had turned the question of money over and over until it was threadbare, without arriving at a conclusion, and I decided that it was too great for my small mind and I should let it alone, when one day I encountered a writer who valiantly branded every one without a sufficient competence as lacking in spirit and intelligence. He said that nothing was easier to get than money, and plenty of it, through subjective creation, and those who hesitated to draw it deserved to sit in poverty. He put the matter so much more bluntly than my old friend, Mulford, that it startled me. Was it true that one is to blame for not having abundance? The argument looked specious, but I wanted corroboration from my one adviser before I attempted

anything so bold as to demand a fortune; and in a spirit of humility I sought light on this hard problem. "What may one demand in the way of money; how much is lawful for me, not for my neighbor?" and I asked that it be made very plain and unmistakable. Three days passed before the answer came. Then, as I rose one morning, and was passing to the dressing room, I stopped suddenly in the middle of the floor; for I was no longer in the room, but was apparently standing in the garden, which was in full bloom—though in reality it was early spring, and the ground was still bare. Everywhere was perfect fullness of life of varied type, and though each plant was a different manifestation of individuality, I saw that all drew their sustenance from one source, the common soil which was sufficient for every requirement. While I was drawing the analogy in human life, where men represent this same condition of dependence upon the one Source, I was shown a towering oak in full leaf, and beneath it a tiny flower, known as the speedwell, a plant that never grows over an inch high, with an infinitesimal blossom, both springing from, and maintained by the same soil and using the same elements in their growth; and I heard the words: "Whether you are a speedwell or an oak, you may draw according to your need." The question has never risen again to tease my mind, for the

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answer agreed with what I had felt to be true—according to our *need* may we make our demand, not according to our desire. For more than ten years my intuitions had guarded me from the latter mistake, while they had given full acquiescence to the supplying of every need.

Since then I have learned more on this subject. We do not create any favorable condition by the force of our will; but by purifying our minds and desires, we slowly rise to the level of our higher nature, and live at an altitude where we function naturally through that nature, and learn the use of forces that operate on corresponding planes. Then without conscious effort we manifest, or, rather, reflect in the physical life, the peace, the harmony, the abundance of all good that are the portion of the spirit; our needs are met promptly, and there is no waste of energy or anxious thought about temporal affairs. It may take a long time to reach this state; but, just in the measure that Spirit dominates the individual, will the whole atmosphere of life be re-created.

Again I asked, "What place has drudgery in human life; has it any relation to spiritual development?" This is a universal cry from the heart, and seldom is it answered. In reply I was taken once more into the garden, in my subjective mind, where I saw that it was a symbol of every aim or



purpose that springs from an ideal. There was no visible record of thousands of small movements that had constructed it—the digging out of the slope, the laying of the stones from the rock heap into retaining walls, the building of terraces which shade the soil and keep it moist. These were essential on our dry hill to the present growth and beauty; these arduous labors were the price of bloom which now delights the eye. Though flowers were the direct outgrowth of drudgery there was no evidence of the fatigue, often discouragement, that had produced them: yet the first digging, fertilizing, the sowing of seed, the weary transplanting, the watering and daily grooming of past years were so many fibrous rootlets buried from sight which still fed and nourished the present fulfilment.

Then I said: "I see how the question is answered on the physical plane; but what has it contributed to the spiritual?" Then I was reminded that these flowers of drudgery had not only gladdened the eye, but they had been living witnesses to vital truths. Again and again I had sought them when troubled of heart, and they who are so fresh from the hand of the Creator had said, "Peace, peace." As humble exponents of Universal Law, they had explained many hard doctrines and complexities of civilization; they had

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interpreted the seeming injustice of man, the predatory wrongs of society. They were ever fearless defenders of the faith. These were definite spiritual gifts that I could get nowhere else; these insights were fine intangible flowers of still higher order springing from drudgery: and every labor manifests an etherialized fruit, if we but study it carefully with an open mind.



## A DEAD LEVEL

IN reading old novels, it is interesting to see how the writer has abandoned himself first to one, then another of his characters, alternating the adventures of the hero with the sorrows of the heroine; and not until the last chapter is the entire company brought forward hand in hand, and all the loose ends of destiny are tied in fast connubial knots.

Any life record presents the same literary difficulty. There are lapses, and doublings upon one's track; closely related events are widely divergent in point of time; action sometimes precedes consequences by years. An accurate chronology would play havoc with a coherent presentation, for the scene continually shifts and the curtain falls again and again upon an unfinished act, which may not be resumed or made intelligible until much later. Over and over one is drawn back to some half-learned lesson; and seldom is the revelation from the inner life coincident with the outward event which it interprets, though they are one and inseparable. The narrative is much like music, where the lowest note of an octave or chord alternates with the highest; or where the first simple melody

recurs throughout with a different and more elaborated phrasing.

Whether one cannot breathe long the rarified air of spiritual altitudes, or whether the law of our being demands action and repose, certain it is that most disciples spend a good deal of precious time on low levels, picking their way with difficulty, and often in darkness, with eyes scarcely lifted to the heights where they have once climbed.

My inner life has always been subject to flux and flow; at times rich and satisfying; at other times

"The light retreated,  
The landskip darken'd,  
The melody deaden'd,"

and there is no voice to whisper—

"Follow the Gleam."

These periods of drought were not quickly recognized; they came when I was over-absorbed in duties that never relaxed, when body and mind were taxed to the limit, and no thought was given to "the sweet heavens above."

I failed to see that the situation was of my own creation, not having yet learned the actual proportions of life. Most of it is mere padding; the urgent claim, the pressing, perhaps wearing obliga-

tion, is often of our own making, and of small consequence. While busying ourselves to bring to pass a thousand petty ends, the real issues, the essential value of weeks or months, are not of an exhausting nature: they are epitomized in a single decision, a sacrifice, a renunciation. Silently they present themselves as opportunities to test us, or to exercise our sincerity, our sympathy, our generous desire to rise above lower motives of self-interest, fear, revenge, antagonism; yet their conquest is only made possible by consistent, unobtrusive, everyday living: according to the manner that we meet the true issues do we advance or retard our spiritual life. With this kept in view our relations to others assume larger proportions, and our immediate personal occupations less. Whether we accomplish much or little work in a day is a small matter compared with the greater questions of rising to each test of character.

At this period I fancied that work was the ultimate end, and the longer the day, the greater the merit, and I created obligations as fast as they were leveled. There is a certain blind fury in the way conscientious people attack their duties; one would think they were storming a fortress, and while no honest effort can be wholly lost, a misdirected energy applied to minor things produces a tremendous concussion that soon exhausts the

nervous system. When we feel that we have to make a stiff fight for every moment of quiet reflection, that no portion of a day is ours to use freely, the chances are that we have reached an inflated idea of our usefulness that will probably grow until it bursts in some moment of complete revolt and exhaustion. Then we may wisely decide not to carry the universe any longer, and are glad to settle back with a few modest duties, unmistakably our own, and dandle them contentedly on our knee. In a depleted state of vitality that attends overwork we see nothing clearly, and the greater the need of a little sanity, the thicker the darkness closes about us, owing to our ignorance of the situation. I believe that a large percentage of mental and religious gloom is due to nerves, and nerves are the product of mistaken zeal.

Some little time before the incidents which were given at the close of my last chapter, but which, chronologically, should come much later, under a future heading, one of these arid seasons occurred, and prevailed so long that even the memory of past blessing was parched and shriveled; and weeks and months went by, after I began to reach out again for the light, without the slightest token. These are times of dearth extending into doubt; experiences that take the eye and ear of faith to receive, leave no monuments behind; and it is easy to ques-

tion their reality when we try vainly to repeat them. If the effect of music is fleeting, if the memory of the most stirring expression of art fades, how can we expect to hold fast to the more intangible spiritual impressions, those that were never associated with matter or our senses in any form? That men do, that they cherish the memory as a most sacred possession, proves that there was reality. Never has a more difficult problem been set for humanity than to judge as wisely, and to trust the spiritual experience as implicitly as the physical; for while the pulpit urges us to seek and to prove the heavenly vision, at its elbow stand the scientist and the materialist to discredit all unusual testimony under the sweeping charge of illusion, hallucination, and self-deception.

The old familiar darkness and skepticism of former years were settling about me when William James gave us his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. It is more than an able, dispassionate analysis of human aspiration, gathered from the most varied sources: it presents the verdict of divergent minds, saint and sinner, philosopher and the unlettered, in unanimous testimony to the reality of a possible communion with a living God. Much of it agreed with and explained my own experiences, and my heart tingled anew; whether I was able to maintain vision or not, thousands had evidently



borne witness to its existence, and had learned from it the truth.

Again the old hunger returned, whetted by the memory of the crumbs that had fallen to me, and I prayed with renewed fervor. Weeks went on, and my importunity grew. I wanted no miracle, no word—only a return of the old sweet peace, the beautiful dream of the night, faith that turned easily and confidently to the counselor within. Outside a bitter drought prevailed, the garden was parched like myself, and carried no message save of lack and suffering.

One night I was especially wearied: the day had been long, and duties had pressed hard upon my heels until after ten o'clock—a late hour for an early riser—and the reading lamp had burned so low that, before I was aware, it was almost out, and the room was filled with its fumes. I opened windows and doors, but there was no breeze, and the air was stifling. I paused at a window to get a fresh breath before retiring, but the atmosphere of the room rushed past me, laden with kerosene. Then I went to the door, and found the same condition. Not until I went out on the doorstep could I escape it. I stood there reaching out as of old, thinking: "Here is an exact parallel with my state. I burn the lamp of vitality to the point of extinction, and when I try to escape the consequences,

the sordid duties that have drained me pursue me even into the secret chamber. Wherever I turn, they follow close, and cannot be escaped. Is there such a thing as going out on the doorstep of the soul to breathe the upper air? How can one reach that place of sure retreat, where, under any and all circumstances, the door can be opened upon the larger life?"

While I could realize the need, and grasp it intellectually, to meet it was quite another thing. I will not now give the slow process by which the questions were answered for me; for it took me over five years to find the door so dimly discerned that night; but by following a bit of driftwood floating down a river I can show why some of us fail to make an unbroken spiritual progress. When first dropped into the water, the wood hugs the shore for some distance, when suddenly it is caught in a nearby current; and after making a slight advancement, is tossed into a back eddy near the shore, where it lies passively at first, then rides monotonously back and forth within the narrow limits. Unexpectedly it turns about, and heads for the outside current. Very slowly it floats along, and it looks as if it would at once reach the swift middle current and be carried down the river. But it does no such thing; it goes a few feet, then is drawn back and is whirled into the cove again,

just where it was before. This is repeated fifty or a hundred times, before something drives it further than ever before into the passing current, and slowly, and then with gathering force, it is steadily drawn into the real current and passes out of sight—if big enough! little chips will drift aimlessly about until they rot and never escape.

The analogy to ourselves, slightly awakened to new privileges, is almost too obvious to draw. Newly parted from the unthinking multitudes who rest idly on the banks of traditional beliefs, we hug the shore of convention, where the slow current is one of compromise; and, scarcely knowing it, in an hour of timidity, we lose heart, and are thrown into a back eddy of distrust where we float aimlessly around, believing ourselves creatures of circumstance, victims of fate, perhaps. Then we feel again a slight response to the current of modern thought, which proclaims that freedom and progress lie in a man's hands, and we are carried back into the stream of personal endeavor; not far, however, not into the middle, where strong consecrated souls are working. A little success and much failure throw us repeatedly into a state of apathy and doubt; but the call of the higher nature urges toward the stream of power, where catching enthusiasm, and feeling assured that we are finally about to enter the strong swift currents of proof

and conviction, we are suddenly thrown back just as before, and then are sure that we are helpless and imprisoned by conditions. What is the trouble?

For an explanation we must go back to the driftwood. Wherever there is a back eddy, you will find beneath the sluggish currents near the shore there are hidden rocks that do not rise above the water. When the under part of the stream flows against them, having little power to resist the impact, the water parts, but the undercurrent is forced along the line of least resistance, which is in toward the shore. The floating wood feels the two opposing forces, but as there is very little pressure behind to drive it on, it tosses about a little and then as most of its bulk is sunk in the lower current, it follows that beneath back into the eddy.

Now here the similarity between driftwood and human nature is very striking. Underneath the current of aspiration and progress is the bed rock of old habits, hereditary tendencies, all that constitutes personality—the hidden side of the nature; and accompanying the feeble striving after the higher life, runs this lower current of custom, family tradition, worldly interpretation of events, confidence in commercial methods, and the spirit of self-protection; and when we try to assert and maintain hope, not yet strengthened by knowledge into

real power, we go contrary to accepted standards; there is a conflict between the new faith and the old thought, and the old being the stronger, we are thrown back into our former state; and the lower the rock of obstacle, the surer the defeat. For if a rock rises high above a stream, the water parts about it, and gains force from the collision, and goes on the stronger. If an obstacle involves high principles we are the sturdier for meeting and surmounting it; but if it is such that it does not touch spiritual levels, simply is something that affects the daily physical life, then the impact may be a benumbing of the higher, and not a stimulus.

What are some of the rocks encountered on the lower levels?

Sloth, that easy-going spirit, which is so comfortable to live with; the amiable, smiling disposition that is never disturbed out of a genial torpidity—very different from poise and calmness that come only from self-control, acquired through a strong self-mastery. This is the first and hardest to overcome; a determined will and constant vigilance are needed to hold to the new aim. Of our own choice must it be done; there is nothing to help and everything to hinder; and unless we are capable of a sustained purpose, after a few experiments and failures, we drop back into the eddy of doubt and despair, and like the little chips that ride about

until they rot, we finally content ourselves with the futile things we tried to escape; and we have gone no further when death overtakes us.

Convention, that polite agreement upon the terms of human intercourse, where he who offers the least resistance is the most popular and highly praised—the very antipodes of a fine spirit that gives no offense because of a deep love of humanity, that sees in all men brothers, refrains from criticism, exercises a perfect tolerance, and perceives the good in all things, but never conforms to a baser standard.

Vanity, that is so often mistaken for self-respect, that weak desire to gain the approbation of others, the wish to shine among people, which prompts us to shun anything that would make us seem different or peculiar in the common crowd, that will yield almost any conviction, and make any sacrifice to avoid being laughed at, or even questioned by others.

Pride, which is more insidious than vanity, it being of the mind and heart and not of the person. It is the consciousness of superiority, the holier-than-thou attitude of those who know that they possess a good thing, and rear a barrier of separation from those they deem their inferiors mentally or spiritually; that unwillingness to see that all men have a measure of the Spirit, that all

religions, all philosophies are but the expression of souls who have hungered after righteousness, and have borne testimony that it was found.

Self-indulgence, that loves the good and zesty things of this life, the rich table, the luxurious home, the deferential attendance, the exaltation of those who are served and the debasement of those who serve; that loves—not uses in a simple and natural, subordinated way—personal adornment, the silken swish, the glittering bauble, the perfumed life; not that any of these are in the least evil, but the over-emphasis on them throws the element of disproportion into their use.

And most subtle of all, Self-assertion, that defiantly works its will in spite of the small inner voice of protest; that budding recognition of divinity within which longs to manifest power, to escape limitation, without the least idea that the limitation is probably a home production, a Jack's beanstalk; and, if allowed to climb to the top of the proud creation, we may encounter giants, as Jack did—giants that must be met and vanquished on their own ground; and sometimes, when hard pursued, we hurry down, and cut the stalk, lest the giants overtake the little panting creators who are trying to escape the consequence of mistaken ideals.

Now I had been thrown back upon myself many times in the way described, and I had struck more

or less forcibly every snag just enumerated; but there was another, quite unsuspected, and more destructive, if possible—a jagged rock that lies imbedded in almost every human being, that takes many forms, and, unlike other geologic formations, grows as if it were a living organism. You may recognize a similar hindrance in your own life when I describe this snag which shipwrecked me for a time.





## THE HIGHER ECONOMICS

WHEN I saw my father's affairs involved, after my marriage, and my mother's private fortune disappear, and that of my husband suffer great reduction, I felt dismay, and believed there was need of making provision with my own hands against the evil day; and I redoubled my efforts in my industry; but, with a small margin of profit, and heavy outlays attending an enterprise without reserve capital behind it, the limited number of skilful workers at my disposal, and gratuitous services to the general public, my hoard increased slowly, though I worked from ten to sixteen hours a day. It had taken three years, in the beginning, to acquire enough to meet the increasing running expenses of the work, and until they were amply provided for, I made no personal use of any portion of the earnings. I denied myself small trifles—the little comforts that lie so close to necessities, and I spent nothing for personal enjoyment; I took no holidays; the tense bow was never relaxed. You whose purse has felt stringency, know the tightening about the heart that prompts the tightening of the purse strings. I then began that tedious

and painful molding of the tiny snowball that I meant to roll up increasingly to provide for my old age; for by and by the earning power would diminish as the years increased—you know the insidious argument of fear. Yes, I was in the grip of this terror that takes so many forms: it is fear, and not thrift, that urges so many of us to save and stint. What was I afraid of? God. That was the literal truth. I thought I had escaped the toils of the old theology; but, when we have been steeped in an atmosphere of retribution, in which loomed the old grudge against man, the red, insistent clamor for sacrifice, emanating from a God who spared not His own Son—sacrifice, not in the original sense of *sacrum facio*, to make a glad and sacred gift upon the altar, but the heartrending abnegation, the literal offering up of our Isaac, the dearest thing in life—we never wholly escape the horrible bogie of discipline; and to our dying day, many of us wear the scar of our theology, and are positively afraid to confide with God regarding our hopes and plans, lest, in a jealous moment, He snatch them from us. Have you not heard men say, "I am so happy that it makes me afraid?" And what of the Greek divinities, who were propitiated lest they should destroy men at the height of some joy? And what of the ancient temples dedicated to Fear? Do you recall the fortunate

king, Polycrates, who was advised to make a propitiatory sacrifice of what was dearest to him, his prized emerald ring which he dropped into the sea, and its strange restoration to him through a fish that had swallowed it, which was presented as a gift to the king? Was this recovery regarded as a token of acceptance and restitution by the gods? No, indeed: they were still unappeased, and Polycrates paid the penalty of favored men; he was shorn of his kingdom.

Is it any wonder, in the face of pagan and Christian teaching, that we grow fearful, and want to run away from the afflicting hand? that we are in a sad plight, when we want to make a little private investment? We dare not trust too implicitly a Providence who has let our affairs go to ruin; for some inscrutable reason He may not want us to get the 6 per cent. interest that we must have to live in any decency; yet, some night, we muster courage and tell the Lord about very flattering prospective values, referring Him to a certain firm for further information, and ask Him in a very low, inaudible way that never can reach the ear of Heaven, if He does not advise the move; and if the answer does not come at once, we ignore the rising doubt (that should deter us) and hurriedly tiptoe around to our broker, and follow our bent very softly lest the Lord should suddenly bethink Him-

self of our affairs, and countermand the order, and we be deprived of the lawful profits of a rising market. Then if things go awry, we say, in the midst of our tears and despair: "Lord, we did ask you, and you made no reply; and it looked safe, so we risked it on our own account, as something had to be done at once: things were so bad."

Now you may never have done anything of the kind, but I fancy that if an autopsy is ever held over me, somewhere, on the palimpsest of my heart, some such record as this will be disclosed. I was afraid that the Lord would not take proper care of me; that no matter how zealously I served Him through ministering to His little ones on earth, He would forget about it when I was sixty-odd and enfeebled by hard work. As the snowball did not increase fast enough, I planted my savings deep in a copper mine, and then made another deposit; and when these sunk lower than any bottomless pit, though I became ill from the long strain and worry, I worked on doggedly and added the pitiful earnings of another two years as a last resort to draw the first two investments back to the surface. As I remember, it was an anxious time; I did ask very fearfully what I should do, I wanted what was best for me; I asked several times, with no answer; and, as silence gives consent, I did what I wanted to do, and not until the moment I opened the receipt from

the broker for my second purchase which was to help me by a happy rise in the market to pay for the first lot—O futile, golden bubble of hope so frequently bursted!—did I suddenly recall an incident that occurred when I was but eight years old, and had been long forgotten. I had put my fingers into a feed cutter, and only by the merest chance was my hand saved from hopeless mutilation. This flashed across my memory; and then I knew that I had made a mistake—but it was too late; and the toil of seven years was reduced to the value of a bit of worthless paper.

I sickened under this loss, for it left me in debt, with nothing to pay it, and bankrupt in faith. I brooded over it just as you are perhaps doing at this moment; for though I am a good fighter, I am a poor loser, and between the loss of years of labor, and the total collapse of health through nervous prostration, which precluded anything but intermittent effort for an indefinite period, and a fierce rebellion against the work which was relentless in its demands, even when I was laid low, a toil that had added literally nothing to my welfare, I was in a sad state. I will draw a veil over the time that followed, for when the mind is sick and the body almost helpless, no lesson is profitable, no light shines, no purpose is intelligible. The body cannot recover so long as the heart is in re-

bellious discord, and a harmonious mind comes only with the restored body; and so one revolves round and round on the downward spiral until he reaches the very lowest pit of darkness, where he learns to be still from sheer helplessness. In the silence he sees the folly, and perceives that he has forfeited sympathy through a perverse judgment. Any business man around the corner would have advised against the action; and he knows that ravings against fate are like the tiny fist of an angry child against a parent; but the knowledge does not help nervous indigestion and insomnia. While good for the soul, it does not mend the broken body; yet, in time, it leads to an inevitable recognition of Providence—even if He does not always provide what is asked; it helps one to see that his puny human life is much too big a proposition for him to solve alone; and, if he is wise, he will give over work for a season, will seek a sunny, warm climate, will go apart an hour or more every day in a quiet chamber, open the window, and sit in the healing sunshine while he opens the window of his soul, and says very humbly and wistfully, "Lord, I have done Thee a great wrong. I pray Thee to fill my heart with a perfect trust, a love that shall recognize Thee as my Father"; and gradually the tension is relieved, and the heart grows calmer, and the spirit within once more as-

serts itself; and some day, years afterward, it will help the mind to go over the ledger and see what were the real assets saved out of the wreck.

What, at first, looked like a dogged resignation becomes peace, deep and abiding, when one sees that, in spite of everything, life goes on as if nothing had happened; one still has three meals a day, plenty of clothing, the home and its comforts, daily love and companionship, books, friends, this beautiful world; really it looks, in the light of time, as if nothing of any importance had been lost, only useless self-confidence and wilful self-assertion. And the gains are many: first a sweet reasonableness that learns to apply money to lawful ends to supply the present, not the future, need; to rejoice in passing on the legal tender of the country in exchange for many modest pleasures. I never thought to learn this joy; for, in my youth, the family was allowed to run up unlimited bills of credit, but I never knew what it was to handle actual cash, so that money had a fictitious value in my eyes—it was a rare and choice thing to be saved and guarded; money was too good to spend; checks were the proper wear; and great was the day when the inflated dimensions of a dollar or a ten dollar bill shrank to the size of some object desired. The pendulum swings as far one way as it goes the other; and, liberated from the bondage



of gold, it is rather hard for me to hold on to it now; if, for no other reason, I want to spend it in order to prove that I am no longer afraid of it.

I had asked God to give me what was best, and He had literally answered my prayer, and granted me the blessed privilege of loss, in order to show me that there was something better than to provide penuriously for old age. I did not realize how contemptible the hoarding spirit was. There comes a day when we must learn to depend upon God, not as our supply, but as the continual *source of our supply*. So long as we have five hundred or a thousand dollars in the bank as a tidy reserve fund, we do not know what it is to trust God to meet our daily need; we never have the chance to prove what a good banker He is, when we do not draw upon Him. Our all-sufficient working hands and the comfortable balance to our credit that they have secured, will do more to eclipse a practical faith than men think. You never know how generous your earthly father is until you go to him with a request for a favor—the bigger, the better; for you are not apt to consider the constant provision of comfort in the home as any particular evidence of love; and if your father has plenty, he proves that it is not a tax, but a pleasure, to grant your wishes. Since man is the only interpreter of Deity that we have, it is well to study God at first hand

in your own father. You will understand a good deal more than you ever did before, if you will put your parent under the microscope, and analyze his affection and generosity to those he loves. This does not prevent him from giving you good advice at times, and even refusing things that he knows are not for your good.

I believe that stint and poverty come in our lives for the purpose of instructing us, and it is vain for us to make affirmations such as, "I am rich; I have abundance"; even if we have the power to manifest it through concentration, for no mental cure for poverty can remove the condition permanently, until one has learned the truth which poverty was sent to teach. Affirmation of money, to the exclusion of all other desires, may bring relief for a time; but it does not touch the cause that lies behind the pinch, and until that is removed, one will surely be drawn back again to learn what poverty was designed to teach, when, perhaps, it will be harder to bear. Some of these lessons relate to careless improvidence, lack of faith, or patience, or perhaps sympathy; it may be a refusal to co-operate with the working world; or to correct an inordinate love of money, or self-indulgence.

It is as if a student working for a degree, should drop mathematics from the course, because he

thought algebra hard; later, finding that he cannot get through without mathematics, he has to take up algebra again. He simply defers his graduation in proportion to the time he has wasted in not complying with the course. He alone can repair the deficiency, and though his instructors have an affection for him, they cannot help him so long as he refuses. Until we reach out as we do in earthly relations, and through faith establish an intimate friendship with God, we shall always fear the wings upon which riches fly away. Under cultivation, a feeble, apprehensive faith may grow into a life based upon perfect trust.

By a life of trust, I do not mean one of supine inactivity that falls back passively upon faith for daily support, without making personal effort; but one where life is so poised, and intuition so calm and clear, that a man is prompted to right action at the right moment; he quickly sees opportunities and judges them infallibly, and he is able to avail himself of the work that God offers him, the larger advantages that are presented to a well-balanced and capable person: he is one whom the world needs and trusts with important enterprises. He knows what is for him, and makes no mistakes through a flurried or wavering judgment. So the life of trust is the only one to live from the standpoint of worldly, or the higher, economics.

Though I gained much in the Southland, I had not yet grasped what I have just set down; I had lost my hot rebellion against fate, and, quite still at heart and open to instruction, I was willing to begin over again. During late May and June the weather was very dry and hot, and by July, the spring perennials which are so luxuriant of bloom had passed, and the garden was parched with the drought that continued. I grew weatherwise and worried, and from time to time transplanted annuals from the walks which fairly overflowed with self-sown plants from the previous year, into places that threatened to be quite bare later on. Although vigorous before lifting, these transplanted things died as soon as re-set and for weeks I continued this anxious transference of investments for future use. Meantime the walks were really encumbered with blooming intruders, so that one could scarcely step, and my husband protested against the general untidiness; for a flower in the walk, to an orderly mind, is matter out of place, and must be cleared up. But I defended the disorder on the grounds of prudence, and said that in due time I should need every one of them; that by and by there would be nothing else, if the weather continued. But the weather never does continue any line of procedure; and after six weeks of this over-careful thought for the morrow, a heavy rain

fell, and the myriad plants, gaping for water, revived in a night, and every bed was so full of bloom that I had no need of the trifling annuals that I was preserving as substitutes.

I was greatly surprised at the instant effect of the shower, and stood looking with pleasure at the restored beauty, when all at once I saw that it was an exact parallel with my own bitter experience. My early life had been like a spring of careless bounty, and when youth was past, and the pinch began to come, I took alarm, and looked about for things that would serve in time of need. So far, the effort had been futile; every prudent plan died as soon as matured; all about me had been the small daily comforts in abundance, and the real pinch was still in the future, yet I was trying to hold fast to something that would serve that grim future, and nothing had proved permanent. Could I not take on trust the present issue as a promise of a happy finale in my own affairs? Could I not believe that my drought would end some day through natural law? and then would descend abundance of every good thing, the lawful fruit of former labors ripening in due season, that would fill all gaps, and supply all needs, and perfect beauty and justice would manifest their power, and it would be found that nothing of true value could ever be lost. I compared every tiny phase of the

garden with my life, and not a link was missing in a perfect similitude. Then I said to the eager man with the hoe: "This lesson has been before my eyes for weeks, and is only now perceived. I have learned it; you may clear the walks, beautiful as they are; I see there is no need of hoarding trifles any longer."

We who are skeptical about the daily supply, and fearful about using it freely, should stand by the side of a river that pours itself over a great falls. Is it conceivable that in a moment of doubt, the rock bed should say, "I have decided that I cannot afford to pass on this volume of water at once; I shall save the most of it, for I do not know where it comes from, and how can I be sure that the sources will not fail; in which case, I should become dry, for I cannot produce the water, and it is simply going to waste."

"How long has this volume been pouring over the falls?"

"I know not—but geologists say that it is probably æons of time, judging from the slow recession."

"And all this time the supply has never failed?"

"Never; sometimes I am so full that the water overflows the banks and refreshes the land; it has never been less than it is to-day."

"Can you not trust the great tributaries that

are flowing, the innumerable brooks that, in turn, feed them, and the rains of summer and the snows of winter that never fail to descend, and the hurrying clouds that stoop and drink from the ocean to pour it back into the streams? You are but a channel for unfailing cosmic forces. You have nothing to do with the sources; you have but to hold yourself open to what is given to you, and pass it on. Do not try to hoard and hold it back: nothing could be more disastrous; for that mighty power that now uses you so freely, will withdraw, and surely make for itself other channels and you would then find yourself in the very position you fear most—a dry useless river bed.”

“Am I simply an instrument? I believed this supply belonged to me, that its strength was mine, to use as I pleased. What a relief it is to think no longer of possible failure, nor of the apparent waste, but to look upon myself merely as a channel of inexhaustible Power.”

## TRAINING

THE work of creation is not completed when God sends a soul into this world to take human form; and, though it is true to a large degree, that a man holds his future evolution in his own hands, yet we must realize that no single life represents unlimited opportunity for development. If even the greatest and highest can compass but a fragment of human possibilities, what of the vast majority of souls that take human form with dull perceptions, but little reasoning faculty? The events of high stimulating character that come to them are few, and their response to the universe about them is feeble. Their life consists of a dreary round of duties, too often uncongenial, the result of circumstance and not choice, leading apparently to no end, and they are met in a hopeless, perfunctory way. Life is but a mockery if the least of such souls has been created for this one particular existence alone. If they pass out from the earth plane so little equal to the possibilities of human life here, what chance have they to make a brilliant use of the larger existence of the next? The slow inevitable law of evolution will follow them be-



yond the pearly gates. Dull earthly tapers will not burst into uniform spiritual flames of power: there will still be lights and Lights of varying intensity. It is idle for the church to preach a crystal heaven of gilded leisure, interspersed with hallelujahs: it makes no appeal to the average mind. Until it gives a greater initiative to personal effort here and now, theology can never rouse the masses to give the aid necessary for their salvation. Once convince a man that no effort is lost, that his present life is largely the product of his own thinking, the result of his pursuit or lack of ideals, that it is a definite preparation for the next stage, that his progress or delay lies wholly with himself, that there is a vital connection between present daily habit and behavior and his future state, and that he is determining definitely to-day what his future will be, and you have given him a spur that will enable him to throw off lethargy and rouse him to a final self-analysis and personal activity.

I believe that unrest, labor agitations, and commercialism are the direct fruits of materialism. Let a man lose faith in the unseen, and he will make a desperate grab for the present good. There has been no more pernicious doctrine taught than that which is embodied in, "One world at a time." That is the religion of the beast, the striker, the libertine, unawakened to spiritual consciousness.

If you could convince the laboring man that only by faithful discharge of his obligation to-day could he hope for ultimate freedom and progress—which is the soul's desire, however it may be distorted—we should put a speedy end to strikes and violence: for no man would dare to raise his hand against his brother. But how shall this be brought with conviction to those immersed in greed, selfishness, and rapacity? No appeal directed to the intellect alone will touch them; they must first learn the lower aspect of the truth that injustice does not pay. There is, deeply rooted in the human heart, though not always applied in outward life, the idea of a just balance, the inevitable consequence of good and evil; it is the mainspring of human action. Only when the laborer discovers that it is his work that he hates, and not the employer, and that the hated work is his means of grace, education and liberation, will he no longer seek to escape it. It is too much for an undeveloped man to learn this truth, and also to apply it, in a single life. At present many are slowly perceiving it through suffering and loss; later they will return to the human life, wiser and calmer and more reasonable because of this present experience, to apply it.

Does it seem irrelevant and trivial to relate the small concerns of to-day to the inner life of the

soul? If you think so, you miss the opportunity, the true meaning of to-day. My misunderstanding of their vital connection delayed my progress for a long period, for there was no one to interpret for me the true import of the years that followed the last incident narrated: I had to find out for myself. There are so many in like circumstances, that I offer my interpretation to help them out of their bewilderment.

Again and again I was submerged as before in the details of domestic duties, the never ceasing claims upon hand and brain to perform the lowliest tasks, at a time when many opportunities offered themselves to do more important work, such as preparing magazine articles along unusual lines, to train students in my craft, so that they might return to their homes as teachers and establish small centers of industrial art similar to mine—specialized work peculiarly fitted to my hand and power; yet none of them was I able to do because of the unremitting pressure of home cares. It was a most difficult question to decide where my real duty lay, and I was truly concerned to know what was the purpose of these conflicting conditions. It was made plain to me that personal character was of more worth than work performed; that anything I could write, anything I might teach, was not so important as the training and discipline, the sur-

render of self that came through doing faithfully any humble task set; and that at this point of my development, the work demanded of me in the home was better for my higher education than other service that was more public and seemingly nobler. I no longer had either pride or self-will to combat, so the situation did not disturb me; it was only puzzling. As I applied myself to a serious analysis of my environment, duties multiplied as never before, and were so conflicting that they fairly dazed me. Not for two consecutive hours of any day could I pursue one of them without breaks and interruptions: all continuity of action was lost again. I wondered, as in the old days, if I were losing the power of holding to a definite purpose; for strive as I would, I could not straighten out the confusion. Just as one sees in a tangle of strings, it is not the large ones that cause the trouble; the snarl is made by the little ones that get caught, that twist and knot themselves about the heavier cords. It is easy enough to keep to a large aim; it is the petty interruption at critical moments, the constant distraction from the main purpose, that wears one out. In time I perceived that in gaining self-control I was gaining control of affairs; I could carry on four or five activities as easily as one; and with a manifest gain in working capacity, the whole purpose was

made clear: it was a return to the old training in poise only half learned years before. We think of a poised person as one who controls his temper, who is not offended by disagreeable personalities, who is calm and steady. It is this, and much more. Poise is the perfect equilibrium that attends quietly and promptly to the duty at hand, and then dismisses it, turning easily to the next; it responds to every demand, yet holds to none. It has an interest in work to be done; yet, if need be, relinquishes it instantly, and in any state of incompleteness, and returns to it days later as if there had been no break. Never hurried nor driven in the midst of pressure, it employs its faculties and hands on the task of the moment, enjoying the present, whatever it brings, and yields itself unreservedly to lawful pleasures, but does not try to prolong them, nor mourn over them when they are past issues. The whole secret lies in holding true to one's center, and being controlled by the inner light. So long as one is absorbed in a pursuit and can heed nothing else, so long as he is thrown off his guard when his attention is distracted, so long as he surrenders hand but not brain when called from one occupation to another—he has not learned poise; he has not attained self-mastery. Nor does one gain it by any amount of intellectual assent to this theory of life; it must be habitual, not a studied attitude.

So long as we are striving for anything, we have not yet attained.

Where can one learn this valuable lesson so well as in ministering to others in the home life? What are ephemeral magazine articles or craft instruction compared with this permanent conquest? There is a spirit of haste to-day, that is impatient of careful preparation; and though colleges and universities may compromise with thoroughness in order to fit youth speedily for a chosen work, the Spirit pursues the old method: it files away on obstinate human nature, polishes every virtue, cuts into every vice or weakness, unmindful of protest or outcry.

In the perplexity and confusion, I encountered my old instructor, discrimination—that which recognizes the paramount claim, and perceives when the duty of yesterday is no longer pressing. We must be trained to give equal consideration to things we dislike to do, as to those we like, and to choose between a course of action that appeals to self-interest, as opposed to the almost inaudible something within that says: "This is not for thee." Over and over again I was tested on this point. Business offers were made to me, that were prudent and alluring; yet, on seeking positive guidance, I quickly saw that they were trials to prove whether I would serve worldly interests, or hold to the

higher ideal I cherished—complete freedom. You may ask, how do you get such advice? The influence of the Higher Self is unmistakable, and quite different from the exercise of the orthodox conscience, which deals largely with questions of right and wrong. The Higher Self never uses a deterrent voice; it always leaves one entirely free; it reveals through symbols; through swift flashes of intuition that go to the heart of a matter; by presenting vivid analogies drawn from natural objects; occasionally in dreams when a doubtful question is clearly interpreted. In reviewing the past, I realized that it had addressed me many times when I thought it silent, being too pre-occupied and insistent with my question to hear the answer, which comes at first as a delicate intimation, deepening to conviction, if heeded.

When one is learning discrimination he is confronted with the true and the false, many kinds of contradictions, divergent influences, opposed teachings presented at the same time. At this hour Nature does not surround us with what is strong, unmistakable, and stimulating: she bids life advance, offering in her two hands both good and evil—subtle temptations that pertain to ideals and thought, with their swift punishment held behind her back; opportunity and difficulty; attractive vice, and virtue with its bitter self-denials; ease and

sloth, and labor with its obvious crown of thorns. It is not Nature's purpose to make spiritual progress difficult; she would make man sure-footed and not easily led astray. Every new circumstance brings one back to a renewed conquest of self, the defeat of the lower nature, the instant rejection of the questionable or base, the soul's privilege to choose the highest; this is the curriculum that she sets us all to learn at some time in our evolution. An elimination of evil does not build a strong nature; only that can be trusted which must have truth and purity at any cost. Upon these principles are the heavens built and does the arch of eternity rest. We may be very sure when equally strong alternatives are presented, or one path that is easy and another steep, one course that appeals to inclination and another urged by duty, that Nature is standing over us watching our choice. It is through our helplessness to decide these difficulties that we are forced to depend upon the Higher Self for wisdom, and thus are we trained in discernment.

During these after years I learned the profounder meaning of prayer. It is not enough to hold an attitude of respectful deference toward Deity, nor to say a hurried, perfunctory prayer at morn and even—all this may be but lip service. It is not what we say to God, but what He says to us that makes for righteousness. It is not the




importunity, but the response, that gives value to prayer. In public service we are not taught to wait in silence to receive the blessing. When the time allotted to prayer is occupied with asking for material needs, and we feel that our duty is discharged by enumerating what we want, we have not yet penetrated to the true essence, which is personal communion. It is a duty we owe to ourselves, and a privilege, to set aside a definite time for going apart for the purpose of opening the spiritual faculties to catch glimpses of profounder truths than we usually think, to see things in an unaccustomed light. Only those who have ears and eyes can perceive sound and color; only those who have developed spiritual faculties can discern spiritual things.

The whole matter resolves itself into a degree of vibration. Just as a note on a piano sometimes calls forth an answer from some object in the room, so only those who have attuned themselves to spiritual vibrations are capable of responding to them. The scientific world recognizes that matter and energy are merely modes and rates of vibratory motion; and just as many objects appeal to several senses—sight, hearing, smell, and feeling, so our environment contains in essence that which makes an equal appeal to the physical, intellectual, or spiritual side of our natures; and we perceive from that plane where we are accustomed to hold

ourselves. Those keyed to a high degree of spiritual perception will always discover the spiritual side of matter, thought, events, life in general. They will manifest gifts unknown to the multitude; they will report much that is unfamiliar to the general public. When they escape beyond the common limits, they feel what is not ordinarily tangible, hear the inaudible, and see the invisible. Such gifts betoken an attunement to a higher vibration through the elevation of a sensitive organism.

It may be objected that many so-called public mediums with psychic powers are not elevated: they are often quite unworthy from a moral or intellectual standpoint. But, in reply, I ask you, what do they get? gross error, contradictions, distorted impressions that are wholly untrustworthy and misleading; they are sensitive to a limited degree—but not to the highest. There are many things besides pure spiritual influences lying just beyond our ken. It is a sheer physical impossibility for a gross or sensual human body to register or respond to other than it is itself; it will be negative to every fine spiritual influence. What it gets even of a lower order will always be discolored and obscured by the limitations of the medium. The whole province of Spirit is so removed from the daily thought and traffic that it would only tend to startle and unbalance the average mind, if the



conditions of another plane were revealed to it; and the end would be an eager pursuit of phenomena to gratify curiosity. The higher principle, known as the Higher Self, through which spiritual knowledge and forces are communicated, never lends itself to sensationalism, never ministers to credulity or low motives.

One reason why a use of this power is withheld is, that most people are quite unequal to meet the ordinary conditions on the physical plane; they are so incapable of a right understanding of their environment and of managing their affairs that, even in daily concerns, they are placed in subordinate positions under superiors. What possible good could come from throwing open vistas of spiritual knowledge, perception, and powers of transcending character to those who cannot grasp the elements of a simpler existence? Nature wisely guards an encroachment upon the privileges of a higher evolution until one has reached that state. Wherever the higher centers of consciousness have been prematurely opened upon even a partial gift of clairvoyance and clairaudience, the results are a wild confusion of true and false, a receptivity of higher forces in an unprepared vehicle, and these lead to mental and moral degeneracy.

Great as the gift is, when naturally developed, do not seek to open these doors until you are sure

that they will admit you to a pure spiritual vision which, in its proper season, will be as normal as your present sight. You can only go forward profitably and safely, if for every step that you advance toward spiritual—I prefer the term to psychic—powers, you are willing to take three steps in a development of your moral nature through self-control, mental discipline, purification of your aims, and high aspiration. When you seek truth alone—not phenomena—you are very close to the fulfilment of your desire.

Do you long for a richer experience and a true knowledge of the inner life? Are you ready to give real effort and time and study to secure them? Have you regarded your soul growth as you do astronomy, mathematics, or any science, and devoted years to its development; or have you passively waited, hoping that the kingdom of heaven would take you by storm, or that in some miraculous hour this inner world would somehow burst upon your dull mind like a vision? You will wait in vain if thus you expect to pluck the flower of the Spirit. "Strive to enter in; for straight is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there be who find it," says the great Teacher. The trouble is that many are incredulous of the reality and value of the higher experiences, and consequently to them they are not worth any effort.

"Philosophy bakes no bread," says Novalis, and the business man may add: spiritual insight does not pay the grocery bill, and is therefore unprofitable from the worldly estimate. When you reach the point of absolute hunger that cannot be satisfied on the lower plane, then you will yield all for the pearl of great price. You will allow no obstacle to interfere; you must and will have communion at any sacrifice.

Those who have consecrated themselves to a higher life know how swiftly a true prayer is answered. Do you pray for patience? immediately abundant opportunity is granted to show your lack, and to exercise the little you have. Do you pray for sympathy? you at once are put to the test: all kinds of difficult problems and trying situations rise up to prove you. Do you pray for more faith? before night the chance is given to use it. Do you ask for more tolerance and brotherly love? you have pet prejudices trodden on, and most sacred convictions challenged. Do you ask to have obstacles to growth removed from your path? Have a care, for some of your dearest possessions will fade and shrivel—not because you need discipline, but these are hindrances that have been holding you back and have been awaiting your word of dismissal: you lose the dearer to gain the better. We grow in any virtue by its exercise. If we but

foresaw the mortifications, failures, painful revelations of lack, the losses that press close upon aspiration, we should fear to rise; yet rise we must. The urge of evolution lies in the deepest recesses of our being; and whether we aid or retard it, whether we mount upon failure, or lie crouching in humiliated despair, on we must push; we must meet and master at some time every weakness, fear, and shortcoming.

It is a memorable day when a man decides to make an honest inventory of himself, avoiding pride or disparagement, in a stern self-analysis that glozes nothing. When he has estimated his intellectual and spiritual assets, he is shown how to repair weak places and supply deficiencies. He has the right to know what he is working for, what his life is actually worth from the viewpoint of the Spirit. No matter whether his occupation is high or low, if his aim is to conquer the lower nature, to quicken perception, to use intuition, to make his body a fit instrument to respond to spiritual vibrations, then he is prepared to render true service to God and man. He will find that self-will, pride, and self-indulgence are things of the past. When you and I are ready, we shall find a niche exactly fitted to our capabilities, and ever larger ones awaiting us, as we advance; for God does not attend personally to all the petty housekeeping de-

tails of His universe: He has created millions of intelligences to co-operate with Him in carrying on the work.

Emerson once wrote to my husband, "There is a super-Cadmean alphabet, which, when one has once learned the character, he will find, as it were, secretly inscribed, look where he will, not only in books and temples, but in all waste places and in the dust of the earth. Happy he who can read it, for he will never be lonely or thoughtless again." This is not a fine transcendental saying, but the living experience of every one who opens himself to the teachings of his Higher Self, which is ever ready to interpret for him the meaning of the events of life. The lower mind sees neither the cause and purpose of the immediate environment, nor the escape from it; but when one recognizes that the conditions of life are capable of translation, that they are significant even in detail—then it is of the greatest importance to be able to decipher the meaning. And this the Higher Self will do when the demand is earnestly made. Thus the lessons of illness, poverty, unhappiness, or loss are the more quickly learned, and with the understanding, the causes of trouble are removed altogether: for they come not as accidents, but as teachers. They are either the consequences of broken law, or they are given in order to instruct the per-

son in some truth necessary for his further unfoldment.

All things again became interpretive in my life. It was at this time that the garden was used so frequently as a symbol to interpret problems that I have recorded. Slowly I discerned that the inner and outer world correspond to each other, and are, in a way interchangeable. I perceived that body, mind, and spirit are not separate and distinct like a nest of Chinese boxes; that it is not sufficient for us to respond vividly to the material world about us; that we must respond to inner planes of consciousness through other centers that gradually develop; also that the mind may relate itself wholly to the body, its sensations and concerns; or it may serve as the connecting link between the higher and lower planes of existence. While spiritual things are spiritually discerned, yet it is the mind that finally registers the impressions.

I learned too the value of minute attention and observation. They are great aids in concentration, and were constantly used in my studies of plant life. The dry botanical names grew interesting because they were descriptive, and they soon proved to be more than a valuable training of memory: the garden was a constant opportunity to practise visualization, by which I saw the precise locality and arrangement of hundreds of plants in their



beds at any moment. In preparing the Classified Lists of my garden book, I made it a point first to summon an exact image of the plant in question, study it in detail subjectively, write the description, and then go out to the plant and verify the description. Those who understand what part the imagination plays in our development can estimate the importance of this exercise, and what it contributes to the upbuilding of the mental body.

Every mental operation or physical action presents an opportunity to express power exactly adapted to the need. I tried to embody Goethe's maxim, "Without haste, without rest," to state things exactly, to observe carefully, and more than anything else, to be in harmony with my environment. At times I knew what it was to stand apart and watch the body in action. Those who have taken themselves resolutely in hand know how many are the lapses, how slow the regeneration, how short the effort is of the ideal, how long it takes to build into one's nature the truths that the intellect accepts in a moment.

As I increased in toleration and sympathy, I was led on step by step through various books and people and personal experiences, until one day the Path was shown to me, the goal toward which I had been unconsciously led, and of which I had had

intimations from my earliest childhood. Until that hour I had worked blindly, and without understanding; now, what I had gone through was made plain and intelligible. The knowledge brought peace and renewed activity: I saw that I was following no uncertain light, though it was still in the distance.

Two years later I passed through a supreme test, in the surrender of my heart's desire, which was also a very urgent need in my life. I shall not relate this event, for unless told at length, few would see in it other than an ordinary worldly decision: yet it was far other; for, in the relinquishment, I sacrificed not only personal comfort, but an obvious field of usefulness and freedom, all because I was not sure that its acceptance might not hinder spiritual growth. Having yielded the uttermost, I abandoned my life to a higher guidance more sincerely than ever before. Then came a season of literal walking by faith, for difficulties returned tenfold, and in the climax of them, I rose once and for all time, above the life-long habit of worry and distress about my affairs. I resolutely faced my limitations one by one, recalling how for years I had yielded and cringed before them, had fought against them, had challenged and defied them—in vain; then, suddenly, I asserted from the depth of my being, that, as spirit, I now de-

clared myself superior to them all, that in the strength of the Spirit, I could meet and triumph over anything that might come; and they fell from me like a garment discarded.

From the vivid thrill, the penetrating sense of power that swept over me, I knew that I had touched the high places; and from that moment I stood free from my old self. That night was when I learned what it is to stand upon the doorstep of the soul, and breathe the invigorating air of Heaven. These are meaningless words unless you, too, have passed through liberation; but many will recognize in them an experience like unto their own. To my surprise, the desire that I had yielded so freely the year before, was granted almost immediately, in a larger measure than I had asked—which convinced me that God does not demand sacrifice of His children, but entire consecration; when we reach the latter, no good thing is withheld from us.

As I look out upon humanity, those who are stifled with the pressure of their life, driven and at bay with burdens greater than they can bear, I know what it means to them when the inner light burns low, and they seek here and there an escape, but their environment, their daily habits and mode of thinking follow them: they cannot escape themselves, and they, too, echo the cry, "How can we

drop the pent-up life, and receive the refreshment of Heaven? ”

Have you ever watched a little craft pass through the lock of a canal to a higher level? It is an exact analogy of the spiritual ascent. Though it may make considerable progress, a soul wearies of the lowlands after a time, and finally reaches out only to find the door before him closed. It is impossible to go on unless it is opened, and, as in the case of the lock, it takes patience and effort to open and then close the gates behind. Once within the place of silence, with the door closed upon the world, one must wait, as a vessel does, for the waters from above to fill the inclosure. For a season nothing seems changed; there may be a slight motion, but no advance; yet if one studies the surroundings, he realizes that while he is not moving forward, he is rising, because the outlook is changing; things wear a different aspect, and in time he reaches such an altitude that he looks out upon a new world; also he sees farther, and before him are the upper gates through which he must pass ere he can re-enter the stream that loses itself in the distance.

It is hard to still the burdened heart, to silence the senses; and while we can work it out alone, it does help us to have the advice and encouragement of those who have conquered; but, once within the

quiet sanctuary of the soul, we must close the door even upon those who helped us to enter the place of silence, and must wait patiently and expectantly until the inflowing Spirit fills us, and lifts us to the level desired. But first of all we must earnestly seek the inner life; so long as we pray for it, and yet cling to worldly estimates and standards, to the gratification of the senses, we shall not find the door of escape. We must be willing to turn from the distractions of the lower world, we must be ready to close the door upon them, and open our whole being to the tides that ever wait the true seeker to bear him upward and on.

## THE HIGHER SELF

OVER and over again I have reiterated the possibility of a man or woman rising superior to environment, and controlling destiny; yet the world presents few who do. The average man is not at the apex, as he supposes, but occupies the middle ground in creation, where one pole runs back into obscurity, the other reaches on into futurity. He cannot find himself in the lower animal world; his nearest relative is the monkey, who would become the man, who apes his manners, who is humanity reduced to its lowest terms on the purely physical plane. A man knows that he is worlds removed from that little creature which can be trained to wear coat and trousers, use roller skates, ride a bicycle, eat with a fork, and drink from a glass—but he feels further removed on that outermost rim of his consciousness from the life that comes to him in rare moments of exaltation, from which descend visions and inspirations. He knows no real link that binds him to this unimaginable realm. The average man is like a prisoner shut up in solitary confinement in a high tower from which there is no possible exit while he lives, though there are win-

dows through which he may learn somewhat of the world outside. In a column of flesh that is comparatively insensate except to cold, heat, pleasure, and pain (which primal perceptions vary much in the individual), he looks out from the top of his tower through the windows of the senses. He, the true Self, sits within in silence and total darkness, unrelated to surroundings unless those windows be opened. Ability to discern and respond to environment is restricted to the special organs of sense. Touch or feeling is alone distributed over the body; either records little of value save as a means of self-preservation. In direct ratio to the development of his five senses, does man increase his capacity for knowledge. They are but instruments of the mind; each sense answers only to the vibrations adapted to it; light waves fall unresponsively upon the ear; sound does not affect the eye, so it is obvious that each sense should be trained separately to register delicately regarding the external world. It is said that the ordinary mind is unconscious of ninety to ninety-five per cent. of its sensations and processes; so that the degree of our vitality is determined not only by the number of objects perceived and distinguished, but by the variety and combination of mental conceptions they awaken and the rapidity and exactness of our response. It takes personal effort to increase mental powers,

and a like training to stimulate the senses; but we cannot manufacture high-grade products out of low-grade imperfect impressions.

When you realize how bottled up the Self is, you understand how necessary it is for the senses to register truly. Any judge on the bench can bear witness to the inaccurate way that the majority of people use their perceptions. Every day contradictory evidence is given under oath about the simplest events and statements, as the result of untrained eyes and ears that misinterpret what transpires, and record falsely.

If you once grasp the statement of Herbert Spencer's, that the quality of life is determined by the degree of response to environment, you can see the need of perfecting and enlarging the degree of response. Most people are convinced that they see and hear all that goes on about them: the truth is they get very little, first because their senses are not delicately responsive, and second because they do not look at things in an impersonal comprehensive way. They respond only to that side in which they are particularly interested. What do you see when you pass down a thoroughfare? All of it, or what your mind is intent on seeing? Are you looking for some one, for a certain shop and number, for amusement, for window displays, for opportunities to study faces and hu-



man nature, for chances to prevent cruelty to animals, for a vulgar flirtation with a man or woman, for some lost article? Are you trying to feel the pulse of humanity, to send out silent sympathy and help toward the burdened? You will find exactly what you are seeking, for the thoroughfare holds them all. The higher the mind and larger the faculties, the more we see and understand at every turn in life.

As we sharpen our senses, we perceive more things, also less obvious properties of matter, and by relating our intelligence to an extended field of perception, we increase our usefulness. Developing a single sense will not yield a large return; the tea taster, the wine expert both have a discriminative sense, but not a large response to environment. Every sense can be brought through the control of a developed mind into spiritual as well as physical activity. Some exalt the mind as the crowning feature of existence; it may be or may not: all depends on whether it concerns itself wholly with the body and records nothing but the common sensations, or whether it is set like a mirror to catch and reflect the heavens. While it is desirable to cultivate the mind to the utmost for itself, it is better to silence it at times, and let it become a negative plate upon which spiritual things are imprinted. From this source we get a

different kind of knowledge from that based upon current belief and the shifting human verdict; it is a realization which is not a passive acceptance of other people's ideas and conclusions, but an active unchangeable conviction of the truth. Such knowledge is intuitive and accurate, though for a time it may be unprovable by ordinary methods.

There are three ways that we may use our senses: to live in and for their gratification; to deny the lawfulness of their claim as did the anchorites of old, or even their existence, as many are trying to do to-day; or to recognize them as useful servants, and make them subordinate to the spiritual nature.

There is a grave intellectual peril in the attitude of a certain cult that denies the existence of matter, mind, and body; for while it is true that in its last essence the universe is but a manifestation of Spirit, yet, in the present state of evolution, it is not a full manifestation in the highest form—it is in the process of unfoldment; and a systematic denial of it must have a definite influence upon the mind that repudiates the only means we have of becoming attuned to a spiritual existence. Matter is the sacred symbol through which the soul is to be educated. If we discredit all testimony of the senses through which the resid-

ing spirit is able to communicate with the outer world, do we not benumb our powers, and dull and confuse the reasoning faculties by constant negation? Instead of recognizing the senses as the means of awakening finer centers to which they correspond, and using them as an aid by which the mind is steadied and controlled, if these, together with the mind, be repudiated as errors, then perception and reason will become atrophied through disuse, and neither will render veritable testimony.

While this seems to be a personal question for each to answer for himself, yet it is not the individual alone who must suffer the consequences. It is just as much a calamity to have tens of thousands of minds voluntarily crippled and maimed as it would be if a large percentage of our population decided to cut off both legs and stumped about our streets. Why need one degrade human faculty in order to worship Spirit? Rather does it discredit Spirit to believe that its highest creation on this planet has been endowed with a mind and body that are necessary for use, yet are unreliable informants that must be ignominiously suppressed. I think the day is not far distant when either such tenets will be modified by common sense, or the power of discernment, accurate perception, and memory will be so hopelessly impaired that the

testimony of those who persistently follow this line of auto-suggestion will be seriously questioned, and their veracity will not be accepted in courts of justice any more than that of an unbalanced person, or one who does not bind himself by oath to tell the truth. We need not debase man to exalt God.

Then the pendulum of present thought also swings to the other extreme, and we find many who exalt mind to such a degree that, in a way, it seems almost to emancipate the individual from divine authority. A strong will asserted with power is so creative that, in the first flush of triumph, one can easily overestimate its limits. We have great need of self-reliance: humanity is not in the position of a blind man led by a little dog. We can see, and can know, and we must learn to do and to dare; and a mistake honestly made will often instruct more than to follow truth blindly. Physical, intellectual, and spiritual penalties guard too wide a range of man's use of free will. Each one must learn for himself that what he sows, that shall he also reap. When a man asserts a control over conditions, he is not yet acquainted with his responsibility in its use. He is full of elation at the thought that he can conquer all things. When he finds that he cannot sweep his way clear of every obstacle, and is thrown back upon himself, his limi-

tations may seem greater than before he tried to emancipate himself. He has not yet learned the laws that govern the spiritual kingdom which he longs to rule. Some things lie beyond his manipulation, and defeats are the more humiliating for the occasional success. All lessons must be learned, unlearned, and then re-learned, for we go too far one way, re-act too much the other, and we have to be emptied and subordinated to the great co-ordinating forces.

The pitfalls along affirmations are many: an undue exaltation of the human will; spiritual pride and self-sufficiency; a feeling of superiority over those who do not believe as we do—perhaps a quenching for the time of the inner light, which depends upon the heavenly flame to feed it. You, who are beginning to call forth your powers, how do you regard them? as a means for your gratification so that you can presently sit down in greater ease to enjoy the creature comforts? If so, you are still in a low state of evolution, where it is well not to linger. When you have gone to the utmost of your power, you will be still restless and seeking; for your real desire, though you may not know it, is liberation, not from conditions, but from yourself; you crave spiritual, not material abundance; you have mistaken the possession of more things for that inward peace which is equally con-

tent with little or much. You are misconstruing your hunger for the Divine Presence as a desire for baubles and pleasures that can never satisfy you. Some day in the silence you will see more truly, you will be willing to forego your authority, and will become as a little child, a willing channel through which Divine Power may flow. You may have to go through a good deal before you reach this state of calm, but when you do, it is more than likely that your life will begin to manifest an abundance of good things, because you have reached a point where they will be no longer a hindrance to your progress: then they will not come as a creation of your will, but as the result of the re-creation of your inner nature. When you do not assume that you are molding conditions, but through the elevation of your mind, you relate yourself harmoniously with higher planes, then the creative forces of those planes must play through you, because you vibrate to them and thus your environment will be transformed; quite unconsciously and without effort you will manifest a wonderful fulfilment of your purified desires. This is what is meant by bringing the mind into vital relations with the Spirit; then active desire will cease, for it is consciously linked with the source of power.

But there is still another danger for some of

you who lay too much emphasis upon the omnipotence of God, or rather lay it in the wrong place. You expect Him to work the miracle of grace unaided. You are content to play clay in the hands of the potter, and are disappointed after years of waiting that you are still unformed in his likeness, and without the imprint of the sculptor's hand. You do not know that you must help to model the temple. I believe there is a point at which God almost seems to withdraw an active control in order to allow greater personal liberty, to teach that upon conduct and choice depends progress, and also to enforce the need of absolute dependence upon the light within. In the lower former life you could and did stumble on somehow in the darkness; the world expects plans to go awry, and hopes to fail; but where self-will is the sole guide on the upward path, the consequences of mistakes are too disastrous, the errors of a strongly concentrated mind are too far-reaching. When hazy and indeterminate thought has been gathered and focused, it becomes a weapon of destruction unless used wisely. Once girded intellectually, you must proceed cautiously and see clearly; when you perceive that you suffer from sorrow and illness of your own making, you are glad to submit your whole being to Divine guidance. Your old hopeless longing for direction that

was so seldom answered, the baffled and defeated cry for help that was echoed by a seemingly empty heaven, will give place to an active faith born of experience, and you may be sure of unmistakable leading when you are ready to yield to it.

Those of you who do not quite know how to cut free from the tangle in which you see yourself more as a victim than a creator of circumstances, may want more than a promise held out. A few simple suggestions may make the matter clearer to you. Perhaps you view your life as you do a record made by one who goes hastily over the keys of a typewriter, and the capitals, lower case, and punctuation marks run together in a confused line without spacing or arrangement. Perhaps your duties and private sorrows are so pressing and unremitting that they crowd the days, and leave no breathing space to interpret them coherently; you have no leisure hour for meditation, and no heart for it. Or perhaps some of you are given tasks that are beyond your powers, and you perform them like a child of defective mind, who is placed on a programme to play its little piece before an audience. You falter, make mistakes, do not keep time, sometimes stop altogether and look up appealingly for help, and yet must blunder on to the end with your broken melody, disheartened, sensi-



tive to criticism; and it ends abruptly. I saw just such a performance one day, and it was a perfect picture of many who are unequal to the real issues of life. There is help for all of the little children of faith, and this being a practical age, if you are one of the needy ones, you are entitled to clear and explicit instruction that will come from many sources if you desire it.

No matter how driven or hurried you are, there are things you can do without interfering with other duties. Do not mind if you try for a time, and then forget to do them; you will remember later, and if you are patient with yourself, you will see results just in the measure that you apply yourself. On retiring at night go, if possible, to an open window, calm the mind and open your whole being in an earnest desire that through the night season—that blessed quiet time of repose and sleep for all weary hearts—you may receive the truths you need, and that they may be made plain to you. Do not try to hold the idea hard in your mind as you drop off to sleep, for the intensity of your desire may keep you awake, or give you a restless night. Just send out the thought strongly for an instant like an arrow, and let it go. For a time you may gain nothing from this attitude of receptivity; but persevere, and you will find your thought changing, also your attitude toward your

work and environment, and ultimately they will change for the better. Whenever you have a chance through the day, let your mind be passive for a few moments; try to think of nothing, just be receptive to the calm that comes when disturbing forces are silenced for a moment. Forget your antagonisms, your worries, your rebellion: just be still down to the very depths of your being. Then as you grow in mental control, try to look at common things in an uncommon way, see if you cannot make your work for even a short space better and a higher expression of yourself. Look for color, form, and harmony; try to see the good, and not the evil in people who offend you; try to perceive Spirit in all things. As you strive to view things and to judge events in an individual way, do not be surprised if your old associates think you are growing peculiar; you are beginning to be different from them, for you no longer accept the common verdict. Always ask within yourself what things mean to *you*, not in a desire to be eccentric or egotistical, but to encourage your dawning perceptions and intuitions. Thus will you train and learn to depend upon the finer perceptions; thus are the spiritual faculties evoked. As you advance there is great need of guarding thought and emotion, not to stifle either, but to refuse to harbor any wrong, or to be controlled by passing emotions:

then you will find yourself no longer in a chaos of random thought or at the mercy of your moods. Gradually you will be able to regulate your inner world, and in the calm you will find yourself enriched in feeling and imagination. Sounds, color, form, motion, living organisms, and humanity will make new appeals, for you are learning to perceive through the soul. At first you may speculate upon all natural objects and events, draw analogies, make comparisons, discover interpretations; but do not rest here: learn to let them address you, surrender the mind wholly to the impressions, the thoughts, and the sensations that proceed from them. Then will you learn the speech of nature, and receive intangible communications.

With the increased sensitiveness to delicate intimations, comes an increased sensitiveness to environment in general. Do not be dismayed if for a time you seem to be drawn into unendurable conditions of inharmony. They may not be other than existed before, but when you are awakening on another plane of existence, the suffering may be very keen, and for two reasons. You are not only more alive to the actual state of things, but inharmony and limitation may be really increased in order to rouse you to a determined effort to rise above their influence. We do not meet a difficulty by running away from it; face and conquer it through con-

quering your hostile attitude toward it, and then you may pass on unhindered.

Have you ever watched a newly hatched luna-moth, seeing in it a type of your own soul growth? When it emerges from the chrysalis it unfolds and smooths out its wings, and presents the most beautiful spectacle in the butterfly world, a flower of the air. In the new form, it is not yet perfectly adjusted to environment and lies in the wheel-track of the common highway where there is danger of destruction from any passing vehicle; but it finds sustenance in the moisture there, and does not know the peril. You lift it delicately onto your finger, and in alarm it flutters away; but not yet adjusted to wings, which are an untried possession, it falls to the ground. Again you lift it tenderly, and in trying to fly very feebly and uncertainly, it escapes into the underbrush by the roadside, where it flops about quite helplessly, striking against every sort of obstacle. However, each effort gives it strength, and you take it once more on your hand back to the open highway; instantly it flutters free, every moment growing stronger, then rises slowly, onward and higher, and you run fast to keep pace. Mounting to the tops of low shrubs, and then to the highest trees, it is caught up by the wind and is lost to sight.

Are there not wise hands stretched out to aid us

in our peril and helplessness—hands that lift us again and again until we gain strength and fly on firmer wing on and up, and ever up, until we too are lost to sight?

THE END





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